DragonLance

LEGENDS

TIME OF THE TWINS

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

Hell

DRAGONLANCE LEGENDS

TIME OF THE TWINS

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It had been barely **two years** since the end of the **War of the Lance**...

...when a group of stalwart companions had lead the fight against the dragonarmies, and defeated **takhisis**, queen of darkness.

But in the port city of **palanthas**, it felt more like a lifetime.

the streets **bustled** with activity...

...and ships filled the harbor, bringing goods from across **krynn**.

from the chaos of the war, palanthas had been **re-born**, beautiful and gleaming.

yet all was not quite as perfect as it seemed.

the **tower of high sorcery** was a black mark on the city. one its people did their best to ignore.

though on occasion some did wonder which was more **evil**: the cursed building, or the **dark wizard** living within.

GREETINGS REVERED DAUGHTER OF PALADINE.

GREETINGS, *ASTINUS.*

I MUST THANK YOU FOR GIVING UP YOUR VALUABLE TIME TO ACT AS A *NEUTRAL PARTY* IN THIS MEETING.

AS LONG AS IT IS NOT *WASTED TIME,* I DON'T MIND. HOWEVER, I MUST ADMIT I RESENT THIS WAITING.

YOU DON'T BELIEVE HE WILL COME?

HE ENTERED THE TOWER IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT MORE THAN TWO YEARS AGO, AND HASN'T LEFT *SINCE.*

YET YOU EXPECT HIM HERE?

I *KNOW* HE WILL COME. PALADINE HAS SPOKEN TO ME.

IN A DREAM, THE PLATINUM DRAGON APPEARED BEFORE ME AND TOLD ME THAT *EVIL* HAS RETURNED IN THE PERSON OF THIS BLACK ROBED WIZARD.

WE FACE *DIRE PERIL,* AND IT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME TO PREVENT IT. THIS WILL BE THE *TEST OF MY FAITH* I HAVE PRAYED FOR!

THIS EVIL MAN AS YOU CALL HIM, REVERED DAUGHTER, SERVES A GODDESS AS POWERFUL AS PALADINE: TAKHISIS, QUEEN OF DARKNESS.

OR PERHAPS I SHOULD NOT SAY *SERVES.* NOT OF *HIM*--

AHEM

MASTER ASTINUS, A *VISITOR* HAS ARRIVED.

THE MAGE, *RAISTLIN MAJERE.*

GREETINGS AGAIN, DEATHLESS ONE.

AND TO YOU, OLD FRIEND. RAISTLIN, MAY I PRESENT *CRYSANIA* OF THE HOUSE OF TARINIUS.

GREETINGS, REVERED DAUGHTER OF PALADINE.

I--I...

I DON'T BELIEVE WE NEED TO EXCHANGE *MEANINGLESS PLEASANTRIES*. WE'RE KEEPING ASTINUS FROM HIS WORK, AFTER ALL.

CRYSANIA KNEW RASTLIN'S STORY... KNEW THAT THE **MAGE'S TEST** HE'D TAKEN HAD LEFT HIS BODY SHATTERED, HIS SKIN TINGED GOLD...

...AND HIS PUPILS **HOURGLASS-SHAPED,** FORCING THE MAGE TO SEE DEATH WHEREVER HE LOOKED.

YET STILL, THE SIGHT OF HIM TOOK HER **BREATH AWAY.**

ARE YOU WELL, CLERIC?

I COULD NOT AGREE MORE. I HAVE COME IN RESPONSE TO *YOUR REQUEST*. WHAT IS IT YOU WANT OF ME?

I HAVE COME TO ***WARN YOU,*** RAISTLIN MAJERE, THAT YOUR EVIL DESIGNS ARE KNOWN TO PALADINE.

BEWARE, OR HE WILL ***DESTROY*** YOU.

HOW? LIGHTING BOLTS? FLOOD AND FIRE? PERHAPS ANOTHER ***FIERY MOUNTAIN?***

PALADINE'S WAYS ARE NOT TO BE MOCKED. HE CAME TO ME IN A ***DREAM--***

HAHAHA!

VERY WELL, I HAVE DONE MY BEST TO ***DIVERT*** YOU FROM THIS COURSE.

I HAVE GIVEN YOU FAIR WARNING. YOUR DESTRUCTION IS NOW IN THE HANDS OF THE ***GODS.***

BUT AREN'T WE ALL ***BELOVED*** OF THE GODS, REVERED DAUGHTER? ISN'T THAT WHAT THE DISKS OF MISHAKAL TEACH US?

I'M PLEASED TO FIND THAT YOU'VE READ THE SACRED DISKS, THOUGH YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVEN'T ***LEARNED*** FROM THEM.

DO YOU NOT RECALL WHAT IT SAID IN THE--

KAFF KAFF KAFF

BLESSED PALADINE *HEAL* THIS MAN...

DON'T *WASTE* YOUR PRAYERS ON ME, REVERED DAUGHTER.

THERE IS *NO CURE* FOR MY MALADY. THIS SACRIFICE IS THE *PRICE* I PAID FOR MY MAGIC.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

DON'T YOU? WHAT WAS THE *SACRIFICE* YOU MADE FOR YOUR POWER?

I MUST GO. THESE SPASMS WEAKEN ME. I NEED *REST.*

CERTAINLY, I THANK YOU FOR COMING--

BUT OUR BUSINESS IS NOT CONCLUDED. I WOULD LIKE A CHANCE TO PROVE TO YOU THAT THESE FEARS OF YOUR GOD ARE *UNFOUNDED.*

COME VISIT ME IN THE TOWER, THERE YOU WILL SEE ME AMONG MY BOOKS AND UNDERSTAND MY *STUDIES.*

WHEN YOU DO, YOUR MIND WILL BE PUT AT *EASE.* AS IT TEACHES IN THE DISKS, WE FEAR ONLY THAT WHICH IS *UNKNOWN.*

I... I *ACCEPT* YOUR INVITATION.

YOU ARE *BRAVE*, REVERED DAUGHTER.

I... WHAT ARE YOU--

I AM SIMPLY GIVING YOU A *CHARM* THAT WILL ALLOW YOU TO PASS THROUGH *SHOIKAN GROVE*.

THE WAY WILL NOT BE EASY, BUT UNDOUBTEDLY YOUR *FAITH* WILL SUSTAIN YOU.

FAREWELL, *REVERED DAUGHTER*. IF YOU TRULY DO NOT FEAR KNOWLEDGE, THEN COME TO THE TOWER TWO NIGHTS FROM THIS NIGHT.

I *WILL* BE THERE!

OH, *THANK YOU* PALADINE!

I ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE! I WILL NOT *FAIL YOU!*

once, **SOLACE** had been a wonder of krynn.

a village in the trees, with every home built into the bows of a towering **VALLENWOOD.**

but then the **DRAGONS** had come, and set it all ablaze.

now the people of solace worked to **REBUILD** what they'd lost.

though one well known establishment remained...

...the **INN** of the **LAST HOME.**

RAF! STOP THAT!

WE CLEAN UP SPILLS WITH A *RAG!*

OH, ME NOT NEED THAT! SPILL TASTES *GOOD!*

JUST GO WIPE OFF THAT BIG TABLE NEAR THE FIRE PIT, I'M EXPECTING *FRIENDS.*

OY! TIKA! WHERE'S *CARAMON?*

HE'S... HE'S AT HOME.

AFTER THE SUN'S GONE DOWN? *NOT LIKELY!*

HAH!

two years ago... three this autumn... had it really only been **that long?**

tanis had met **flint fireforge** here before it had all began.

a meeting that had set in motion events that had shaken the world, culminating in the **war of the lance...**

...the battle that cast the **queen of darkness** back into the abyss, and broke the might of the **dragon highlords.**

tanis was a hero now, some even compared he and his fellow companions to the great **huma.**

but tanis didn't **feel** like a hero. he'd lost **too much** during those dark times.

too many **friends.**

WE MUST GO, HALF-ELF.

I'M COMING, REVERED DAUGHTER.

the Inn of the Last Home was **crowded** that night.

Solace had become a **waypoint** for traders traveling to nearby city of Haven...

...and the fact that the Inn featured prominently in the story of the War of the Lance made it a **popular** watering hole.

Still, when the **Big Barbarian** entered, the patrons went silent.

It wasn't often they saw a real, live **hero of the Lance.**

RIVERWIND!

TIKA, YOU LOOK WELL!

THANK YOU. AND HOW ARE *GOLDMOON* AND YOUR SON?

SHE SENDS HER LOVE, AND MY SON IS BUT TWO, YET ALREADY SITS A HORSE BETTER THAN MOST WARRIORS.

IS CARAMON HERE?

HE... HE'S AROUND. SOMEWHERE.

SIT, I'LL CHECK ON YOUR ROOM.

LET HIM *GO AWAY!* PLEASE...

GOOD EVENING, SIRS.

FOOD AND WATER FOR THE MOUNTS. I SENT WORD AHEAD THAT I WAS TO HAVE A *FRESH HORSE* WAITING FOR ME HERE.

MY NAME IS TANIS HALF-ELVEN.

Y-YES, SIR.

YOU MUST BE MADE OF *IRON*. DO YOU REALLY INTEND TO RIDE FURTHER TONIGHT?

I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE, I NEED TO BE IN *QUALINESTI* THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.

MY RELATIONS WITH MY BROTHER-IN-LAW ARE NOT SUCH THAT I CAN AFFORD TO OFFEND HIM BY MISSING THE SPEAKER OF THE SUN'S *FUNERAL*.

BESIDES, I MISS *LAURANA*, MY WIFE.

MY BROTHER!

IT'S BEEN *TOO LONG!*

WHERE'S THAT BIG *LUMMOX* OF A HUSBAND OF YOURS, TIKA? WHERE'S CAR--

I'VE PREPARED A TABLE FOR YOU, AND YOUR GUEST.

OH, YES. MAY I PRESENT CRYSANIA OF TARINIUS, REVERED DAUGHTER OF PALADINE.

LADY CRYSANIA, RIVERWIND, CHIEFTAIN OF THE PLAINSMEN, AND *TIKA WAYLAN MAJERE.*

A HOLY CLERIC. IT'S AN *HONOR.*

I AM HONORED, TO MEET TWO WHOSE DEEDS OF *COURAGE* SHINE AS AN EXAMPLE TO US ALL.

THANK YOU.

NOW, YOU MUST BE FAMISHED, LET ME GET YOU SOMETHING TO EAT.

HOW ARE THINGS AMONG THE *ELVES,* TANIS?

NOT GOOD.

ALLIANCES BETWEEN ELVES AND HUMANS THAT WERE *STRONG* WHEN TIMES WERE DARK ARE BEGINNING TO MELT IN THE SUN.

LAURANA'S IN QUALINESTI ATTENDING THE FUNERAL OF HER FATHER AND TRYING TO ARRANGE AN *AGREEMENT* BETWEEN HER BROTHER *PORTHIOS* AND THE *KNIGHTS OF SOLAMNIA.*

IT ISN'T GOING WELL.

THE ONLY RAY OF HOPE WE HAVE IS PORTHIOS'S WIFE, *ALHANA STARBREEZE.* SHE SUPPORTS THE HUMANS TO HER *INTOLERANT* HUSBAND.

A STRANGE MARRIAGE.

CERTAINLY NOT ONE OF *LOVE,* ALHANA'S HEART WAS BURIED WITH *STURM.*

ELISTAN ASKED ME TO ESCORT CRYSANIA TO THE *TOWER OF HIGH SORCERY IN WAYRETH FOREST,* BUT I CAN'T MAKE THE JOURNEY.

I'D HOPED YOU AND CARAMON MIGHT BE ABLE TO TAKE HER.

I WISH I COULD.

THE TRIBES STAND UNITED, FOR NOW, BUT IT'S A *TENUOUS PEACE.* MALCONTENTS WORK BEHIND MY BACK.

EVERY MINUTE I'M AWAY GIVES THEM A CHANCE TO STIR UP OLD *BLOOD FEUDS.*

CARAMON WILL GUIDE YOU THEN, REVERED DAUGHTER. HE'S WORTH *THREE* OF US ORDINARY MORTALS, RIGHT, RIVERWIND?

HE CAN *EAT* AS MUCH AS THREE ORDINARY MORTALS CERTAINLY, AND IS AS *STRONG* AS THREE OR MORE.

DO YOU REMEMBER THE TIME HE KILLED THOSE TWO DRACONIANS BY *BASHING* THEIR HEADS TOGETHER?

OR IN FLOTSAM, WHEN HE--

YOU HAVE TO GO.

WHAT? TIKA, WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE *ABYSS* IS GOING ON?

JUST LEAVE! *PLEASE!*

KRASH!

WASH IS *THISH?*

A *PARTY?* AND NOBODY INVITED THEIR OLD... INVITED *ME?*

C-CARAMON?

TANISH! MY FRI--

MY...

WHUMPH!

K-RASH!

THE INN'S *CLOSED* FOR THE NIGHT!

BUT--

EVERYONE PLEASE, *CLEAR OUT!*

THAT POOR MAN, PERHAPS I--

THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO FOR HIM. HE DOESN'T NEED HEALING, HE'S *DRUNK.*

HERE, RIVERWIND, HELP ME GET HIM UP.

DON'T BOTHER, HE'S SPENT ENOUGH NIGHTS ON THE *BARROOM FLOOR.* ANOTHER WON'T MATTER.

I WANTED TO *TELL YOU,* I REALLY DID. BUT I THOUGHT... WHEN I TOLD HIM YOU WERE COMING HE GOT SO *EXCITED.*

I THOUGHT HE MIGHT *CHANGE.* I'M SORRY.

WHEN DID THIS START?

ABOUT SIX MONTHS AFTER WE GOT BACK. HE WAS SO *HAPPY* AT FIRST, THE VILLAGE WAS IN RUINS AND THE PEOPLE WELCOMED HIM AS A HERO.

PEOPLE *NEEDED* HIM, HE WORKED DAY AND NIGHT, CUTTING TREES AND HAULING LUMBER. THAT FIRST YEAR WAS GOOD TO US. *TRULY GOOD.*

ABOUT A YEAR AGO, CARAMON *CHANGED*, THE TOWN WAS MOSTLY REBUILT, I'D TAKEN OVER RUNNING THE INN, AND--

NO ONE NEEDED HIM *ANYMORE*.

HE TRIED HIRING OUT AS A *BODYGUARD* FOR AWHILE, BUT EVENTUALLY HE GAVE UP.

NOW HE SPENDS HIS TIME SLEEPING, EATING, AND *DRINKING*. WE HAVEN'T SHARED THE SAME BED IN MONTHS. AND THOSE *RUMORS!*

WHAT RUMORS?

DARK RUMORS, ABOUT *RAISTLIN*.

CARAMON *WROTE* HIM, TANIS, BEGGED RAISTLIN TO COME AND LIVE WITH US, TO TURN HIS BACK ON THE *DARKNESS*.

THE LETTER CAME BACK *UNOPENED*, AND ON THE OUTSIDE WAS WRITTEN: "I HAVE NO BROTHER".

THIS IS RAISTLIN MAJERE'S TWIN? *IMPOSSIBLE!*

RAISTLIN IS *SENSITIVE*, HE EXERTS SUCH STRONG CONTROL OVER HIMSELF. HE'S A *PERFECTIONIST*, WHILE THIS PATHETIC WRETCH--

YOUR "SENSITIVE PERFECTIONIST" HAD A HAND IN *MAKING* THIS MAN A "PATHETIC WRETCH", REVERED DAUGHTER.

PERHAPS IT WAS THE *OTHER WAY AROUND*. PERHAPS IT WAS FOR LACK OF *LOVE* THAT RAISTLIN TURNED FROM THE LIGHT.

YOU DON'T KNOW RAISTLIN.

YOU'RE *WRONG*, HALF-ELF.

TANIS, THE STABLEBOY SAYS YOUR *HORSE* IS READY.

DAMN! I HAVE TO *GO.*

I CAN'T ESCORT YOU TO THE TOWER, CRYSANIA, NOR CAN RIVERWIND OR CARAMON. YOUR JOURNEY'S *FAILED.*

I DON'T NEED AN *ESCORT.* I'M IN PALADINE'S HANDS, NO EVIL CAN *HARM* ME.

I'LL SIMPLY WAIT FOR YOUR *KENDER* FRIEND, AND THEN SET OFF.

IT DOESN'T MATTER, IF *PAR-SALIEN* COULD HAVE *DESTROYED* RAISTLIN, HE WOULD HAVE DONE IT LONG AGO.

DESTROY? I DON'T SEEK HIS DESTRUCTION.

I SEEK TO *RECLAIM HIM.*

WHAT?!

NOW, I MUST REST. MY ROOMS?

THIRD DOOR ON THE LEFT.

RECLAIM *RAISTLIN?* GODS FORGIVE ME FOR SPEAKING ILL OF ONE OF THEIR CHOSEN, BUT SHE'S *MAD!*

NO, LADY CRYSANIA'S NOT MAD. SHE'S IN *LOVE.*

the next morning caramon awoke to the sound of an **army of dwarves** marching around the bedroom.

Uhhh...

THUD THUD THUD

GET AWAY YOU DWARVES! *GET AWAY!*

THAT'S BETTER.

MORNING.

ALL RIGHT, YOU'RE *MAD*. WHAT DID I DO NOW?

YOU DON'T *REMEMBER?*

I-I HAD *BUSINESS* TO ATTEND TO LAST NIGHT.

YES, WE SAW YOUR BUSINESS. THE BUSINESS MADE YOU *PASS OUT* RIGHT AT TANIS'S FEET!

TANIS?!

YOU MADE QUITE A *SPECTACLE* OF YOURSELF IN FRONT OF THE ENTIRE TOWN, AND OUR *BEST FRIENDS!*

WHY? WHY? TANIS, OF *ALL* OF THEM...

KNOCK KNOCK

WHAT NOW?

IS SHE HERE?
WHO?
THE *CLERIC.*
LADY CRYSANIA?
SHE'S NOT IN HER ROOM. HER THINGS AREN'T THERE *EITHER.*
THE STABLE BOY SAID SHE CAME THIS MORNING, SADDLED HER HORSE AND *LEFT.* I THOUGHT--
SHE'S GONE OFF *BY HERSELF.* OF COURSE SHE WOULD.
YOU'RE GOING AFTER HER!
YOU'RE GOING AFTER HER IF I HAVE TO HAUL YOU OUT OF HERE IN A WHEELBARROW!
AFTER WHO?

Tasslehoff had to admit, it was a **beautiful home...**

...even if it was missing a roof, a few walls, and a few other minor things.

Indeed only one part of the house looked finished, the weathered mark above its door marking it as a **wizard's residence.**

THE MAN WHO GAVE US DIRECTIONS MUST'VE BEEN *WRONG*. CARAMON AND TIKA CAN'T BE LIVING HERE.

KRASH!

WHAM!

BAM!

THUD!

I'LL INVESTIGATE. *YOU* WAIT OUT HERE.

'KAY.

THAT'S *ENOUGH*, TIKA!

THUNK!

I'M *SORRY*, TIKA! I DIDN'T *MEAN* ALL THOSE THINGS I SAID!

YOU KNOW THAT I *LOVE YOU*, IT'S JUST... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!

I JUST *TOLD* YOU! LADY CRYSANIA'S IN *DANGER*. YOU'VE GOT TO GO TO HER!

WOW, THIS LOOKS LIKE *FUN!* CAN I PLAY? WHY ARE WE THROWING CARAMON'S *ARMOR* AT HIM?

TASSLEHOFF BURRFOOT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!

I'M SUPPOSED TO MEET *LADY CRYSANIA*, DIDN'T TANIS TELL YOU?

I WENT ON A QUEST FOR HER AND FOUND *BUPU!* THE GULLY DWARF FROM XAK TSAROTH!

SHE'S A QUEEN NOW... OR SOMETHING. STILL SMELLS PRETTY BAD THOUGH.

ALL RIGHT, *WHO'S* THIS LADY CRYSANIA AND *WHY* SHOULD I GIVE A DAMN WHETHER SHE'S IN DANGER OR NOT?

LADY CRYSANIA'S A *POWERFUL CLERIC*. SHE WAS WARNED THAT RAISTLIN'S EVIL COULD DESTROY THE WORLD...

...AND SHE'S GOING TO THE TOWER OF HIGH SORCERY IN WAYRETH TO TALK TO PAR-SAILAN TO--

TO GET HIM TO *DESTROY* RAIST, ISN'T THAT IT?

NO, CARAMON, SHE'S JUST AS BIG A *FOOL* AS YOU ARE.

SHE *LOVES* YOUR BROTHER, SHE WANTS TO SAVE HIM... TO TURN HIM FROM EVIL.

TRULY?

YES, THAT'S WHY SHE CAME HERE, TO SEE YOU. SHE THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO *HELP*.

A WOMAN... A *STRANGER* WANTS TO HELP RAIST, AND RISKS HER LIFE TO DO IT.

KLANG!

SHE'LL NEVER REACH THE TOWER ALONE, YOU KNOW THAT. YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH THE FOREST OF WAYRETH.

A *HORRIBLE PLACE*. I WENT THERE WITH RAIST, TO TAKE HIS TEST.

I GUARDED HIM. HE NEEDED ME THEN.

AND LADY CRYSANIA NEEDS YOU *NOW*.

YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME TO CATCH UP WITH HER. DO YOU KNOW THE WAY?

I DO! OR, THAT IS, I HAVE A *MAP!*

THE LAST TIME WE FOLLOWED ONE OF YOUR MAPS IT LEAD US TO A SEAPORT WITH *NO SEA*.

YOU HAVE TO TAKE ME WITH YOU! LADY CRYSANIA MADE ME *SWEAR* TO PALADINE I'D COMPLETE MY QUEST!

AND YOU KNOW THAT *FIZBAN*... I MEAN PALADINE... AND I ARE CLOSE, *PERSONAL FRIENDS!*

ALL RIGHT. LET'S GO.

shortly...

I LOOK LIKE A *FOOL!*

HIM LOOK JUST LIKE MY HIGHBULP, PHUDGE I.

I'M *NOT GOING!* THIS WAS A STUPID IDEA ANYWAY!

NO. YOU'RE NOT COMING BACK INTO MY HOUSE, CARAMON, UNTIL YOU COME BACK *ONE WHOLE PERSON.*

YOU'RE NOT MAKING *ANY SENSE!* GET OUT OF MY WAY, TIKA!

LISTEN TO ME, CARAMON. YOU OFFERED TO FOLLOW RAISTLIN INTO DARKNESS ONCE, DO YOU REMEMBER?

HE *REFUSED,* SAYING IT WOULD BE YOUR DEATH. BUT YOU *HAVE* FOLLOWED HIM, AND YOU'RE *DYING BY INCHES!*

RAISTLIN HIMSELF TOLD YOU TO WALK YOUR *OWN PATH* AND LET HIM WALK *HIS,* BUT YOU'RE TRYING TO WALK *BOTH* PATHS.

HALF OF YOU IS LIVING IN *DARKNESS* AND THE OTHER HALF IS TRYING TO *DRINK AWAY* THE PAIN AND HORROR YOU SEE THERE.

YOU'RE NOT COMING BACK TO ME AS A HUSBAND OR EVEN FRIEND UNTIL YOU COME BACK AT PEACE WITH *YOURSELF.*

GOODBYE, CARAMON.

While the defeat of their dark queen had been a **blow** to the dragon highlords, it had not **destroyed** them.

Indeed, Kitiara's **blue dragonarmy** remained largely intact, camped in **nearby sanction.**

well within **striking distance** of palanthas.

still, Kitiara had **bigger plans** than the conquest of one city.

plans she wasn't **quite** powerful enough to enact alone.

But then, that's what **family's** for

WELCOME, MY *SISTER.*

YOU'RE THE *SECOND VISITOR* WHO HAS BRAVED SHOIKAN GROVE TO VISIT ME IN AS MANY WEEKS.

SECOND?

THE FIRST WAS A CLERIC OF PALADINE.

AND GREETINGS TO YOU AS WELL, *LORD SOTH*, KNIGHT OF THE BLACK ROSE.

YOUR MAGIC IS STRONG.

I CAN *KILL* WITH A SINGLE WORD. I RULE A SQUADRON OF SKELETAL WARRIORS, AND ORDINARY MAGIC SPELLS *CRUMBLE* IN MY PRESENCE.

BUT I BOW IN THE PRESENCE OF A *MASTER*.

A CLERIC OF PALADINE? YOU'RE GOING THROUGH WITH IT, THEN?

OF COURSE. LADY CRYSANIA TRAVELS TO WAYRETH EVEN NOW.

THIS PLAN OF YOURS IS *CRAZY!* A WASTE OF TIME!

WITH YOUR HELP, WE COULD RULE ALL ANSALON! *THE WORLD!*

I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE WORLD, SISTER.

I COULD RULE IT TOMORROW IF I WANTED IT. I DON'T.

THEN THAT LEAVES ONLY--

NOW YOU SEE THE *IMPORTANCE* OF THE REVERED DAUGHTER OF PALADINE.

A NOBLE, PURE SOUL, YET ONE SO EASILY *MANIPULATED*.

VERY WELL THEN, I MUST GET BACK. YOU'LL *CONTACT* ME UPON YOUR RETURN?

IF I'M SUCCESSFUL, YOU'LL *KNOW.*

FAREWELL THEN, MY BROTHER. WE COULD HAVE DONE *MUCH* TOGETHER, YOU AND I.

FAREWELL, *KITIARA.*

HE MUST BE *STOPPED.*

THE CLERIC IS THE *KEY* TO HIS PLAN, REMOVE HER AND WE THWART HIM.

MANY HAVE DIED TRYING TO ENTER THE FOREST OF WAYRETH, AFTER ALL.

WHEN RAISTLIN WAS SMALL, I TAUGHT HIM THAT TO REFUSE TO DO MY BIDDING MEANT A *WHIPPING.*

IT SEEMS HE MUST LEARN THAT LESSON *AGAIN.*

after spending a few hours sitting on the porch and waiting for tika to open the door... which she never did... caramon, tas and bupu set off down the road leading away from solace.

a journey that involved stops at practically every tavern they came across.

caramon claimed pubs were the best place to gather information...

...but his "information gathering" usually involved lots of drinking, and no talking.

which meant tas had to ask around himself. unfortunately, people rarely spoke to kender voluntarily.

still, tas found if he asked enough times, a person would answer just to get him to go away.

and after three miles (and five taverns), finally had some luck:

I SEEN YER *CLERIC*.

SHE WAS WANDERIN' AROUND OUT IN THE FOREST, WE TOLD HER THERE'S *GOBLINS* ABOUT, BUT SHE DIDN'T CARE.

SAID PALADINE WAS PROTECTING HER. LOOKED *CRAZY* TO ME.

YEAH, THAT SOUNDS LIKE HER.

CRYSANIA'S DAY HAD BEEN A **PRODUCTIVE** ONE. SHE'D MADE GOOD TIME, FOUND A QUIET PLACE TO CAMP, AND HADN'T SEEN A SINGLE GOBLIN.

FURTHER PROOF TO THE REVERED DAUGHTER THAT HER JOURNEY WAS **BLESSED.**

GREAT PALADINE, THANK YOU FOR THIS BOUNTY...

THIS WAY!

HOW DO *YOU* KNOW?!

THE MEN AT THE TAVERN TOLD ME!

WHAT MEN? *WHAT TAVERN?*

THERE, SEE, TOLD YOU I'D FIND *HER!*

FIND WHO?

LADY CRYSANIA! WE'VE COME TO *RESCUE YOU!*

YOU'LL FORGIVE ME IF I'M NOT WILDLY GRATEFUL.

I KNOW, I'M SORRY, EVERYTHING'S KIND OF A MESS.

IT'S FINE. AS LONG AS YOU WEREN'T *FOLLOWED.*

NEED A DRINK...

FOLLOWED? WHO'D FOLLOW *US?*

CARAMON! LOOK OUT!

DRACONIANS!

KLANG!

SHUNK!

THE CLERIC!

KILL THE CLERIC!

STAY AWAY FROM HER!

THWACK!

AAAAAAH!

HEH.

WHOUNFH!

WAKE UP CARAMON! WE *NEED YOU!*

HOLD.

L-LORD SOTH!

PALADINE *SAVE ME.*

FOOLISH GIRL.

DIE.

NO!

OH NO...

IS... IS SHE *DEAD?*

NO, MY BROTHER.

PALADINE WOULDN'T LET ONE OF HIS CHOSEN BE KILLED SO *EASILY.*

HE'S TAKEN HER *SOUL* INTO HIS DIVINE PROTECTION, BUT IT CAN BE *RESTORED.*

STILL, I SUPPOSE I SHOULD AT LEAST GIVE HER THE *APPEARANCE* OF LIFE.

SO YOU DON'T *BURY* THE POOR GIRL.

CARAMON! SHE'S *BREATHING!*

≯HUUH≮

COME, *DALAMAR.* IT IS TIME FOR US TO TALK.

YES, *SHALAFI.*

"Shalafi" was elven for **"master"**, a fitting title for Raistlin Majere, **master of past and present.**

Dalamar had been in the mage's service for only a **short time**, but each day the scope of the man's power and **knowledge** amazed him.

Originally from **Silvanesti**, Dalamar neither claimed nor was claimed by that noble race of **elves.**

When he'd taken the Black Robes he'd become an outcast... a **dark elf.**

It was a **dangerous job.** So dangerous that when they had deemed it necessary to plant a **spy** inside the tower they'd asked for volunteers.

None wished to take responsibility for commanding anyone to accept this **deadly assignment.**

Dalamar had stepped forward **immediately.**

Dalamar had pledged to risk his **soul** for the chance to study with Raistlin Majere.

the most **powerful** of his order.

"You may very well be doing **just that,**" a sad voice had answered him.

SIT.

TOMORROW MY BROTHER AND LADY CRYSANIA WILL ARRIVE AT THE *TOWER OF WAYRETH.*

BUT HOW? THEY'RE *FAR* FROM WAYRETH FOREST.

TRUE, MY *APPRENTICE.* BUT ONE DOES NOT FIND WAYRETH FOREST, WAYRETH FOREST FINDS *YOU.*

YOU WERE VERY *YOUNG* WHEN YOU TOOK YOUR TEST, DALAMAR.

NOT SO YOUNG AS YOU, SHALAFI. I'M IN MY NINETIES, WHICH FIGURES TO BE TWENTY-FIVE OF YOUR HUMAN YEARS.

YET YOU ARE *BRAVE.* YOU HAVE STOOD BESIDE ME AS I DRAGGED *DARK THINGS* FROM OTHER PLANES OF EXISTENCE.

KNOWING THAT ONE FALSE BREATH WOULD MEAN *ETERNAL TORMENT* FOR US BOTH.

IT WAS MY *PRIVILEGE.*

AND YOU KNEW, DIDN'T YOU, THAT IF SUCH AN EVENT OCCURRED, I WOULD SAVE *MYSELF* BUT NOT YOU?

OF COURSE, SHALAFI. I WOULD SACRIFICE *ANYTHING* FOR THE SAKE OF MAGIC.

FOR MAGIC AND FOR *POWER.* BUT TO WHAT END? WHAT DO YOU *WANT,* MY APPRENTICE?

TO RULE A KINGDOM? TO TAKE *REVENGE* ON YOUR KINSMEN? OR DO YOU WISH AN ALLIANCE WITH SOME *DARK LORD?*

MY SISTER, PERHAPS?

I--

YOU SEE, I HAVE *COME CLOSE*. I HAVE DISCOVERED THE HEIGHTS OF YOUR AMBITION.

HAVE YOU NEVER GUESSED AT *MINE?*

I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED,.. YOU HAVE SO MUCH POWER. ALL THESE LANDS, ALL ANSALON COULD BE *YOURS.*

THE *WORLD* COULD BE MINE, BUT I CARE NOTHING FOR THAT. MY AMBITION GOES *FURTHER.*

THAT *DOOR,* DO YOU KNOW WHERE IT LEADS?

YES, SHALAFI.

AND DO YOU KNOW WHY IT IS NOT OPENED?

YOU *CAN'T* OPEN IT, NOT ALONE. ONLY ONE OF GREAT, POWERFUL *MAGIC,* AND ONE OF TRUE *HOLY* POWERS MAY TOGETHER OPEN--

AND NOW YOU SEE WHY I'VE TAKEN SUCH AN INTEREST IN *LADY CRYSANIA.*

BUT... *THAT'S MADNESS.*

IT *IS* MADNESS, WITH MY LIMITED ABILITIES. THAT IS WHY I'M ABOUT TO UNDERTAKE A *JOURNEY.*

I SHALL TRAVEL *BACK IN TIME.* BACK TO THE DAYS JUST PRIOR TO THE *CATACLYSM.*

WHEN *FISTANDANTILUS,* THE GREATEST MAGE TO EVER WALK KRYNN, WAS AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS POWER.

AND THERE I WILL MAKE HIS POWER *MY OWN.*

BUT HOW--

THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TONIGHT.

YOU MUST MAKE YOUR *JOURNEY* AND BE BACK BEFORE I LEAVE.

THERE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE SOME LAST-MINUTE INSTRUCTIONS FROM YOUR *MASTERS.*

Y-YOU ARE MY MASTER, SHALAFI.

BUT NOT YOUR *ONLY ONE.*

AIIIEEEE!

SSSSSSSSSS

RELATE TO THEM *ACCURATELY* WHAT I HAVE TOLD YOU, AND WHAT YOU MAY HAVE GUESSED.

AND GIVE THE GREAT PAR-SALIEN MY *REGARDS...* APPRENTICE!

the next morning...

CARAMON! *WAKE UP!*

HUH?

WHAT'S WRONG? IS IT CRYSANIA?

NO, SHE HASN'T MOVED. IT'S THE *TREES.*

THE... TREES?

THIS... THIS IS THE *FOREST OF WAYRETH!*

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! MY MAP SAID WE WOULDN'T GET TO THE FOREST FOR WEEKS!

WE DIDN'T. IT CAME TO *US.* LIKE WHEN I WAS HERE WITH RAIST.

≠YAWWWN!≠

LOOK! WIZARDS!

WHO ARE YOU?

WHO CARES WHO THEY ARE? THEY'LL BE ABLE TO HELP CRYSANIA!

I DON'T TRUST 'EM.

C'MON, CARAMON! IT'S LIKE THEY'RE INVITING US!

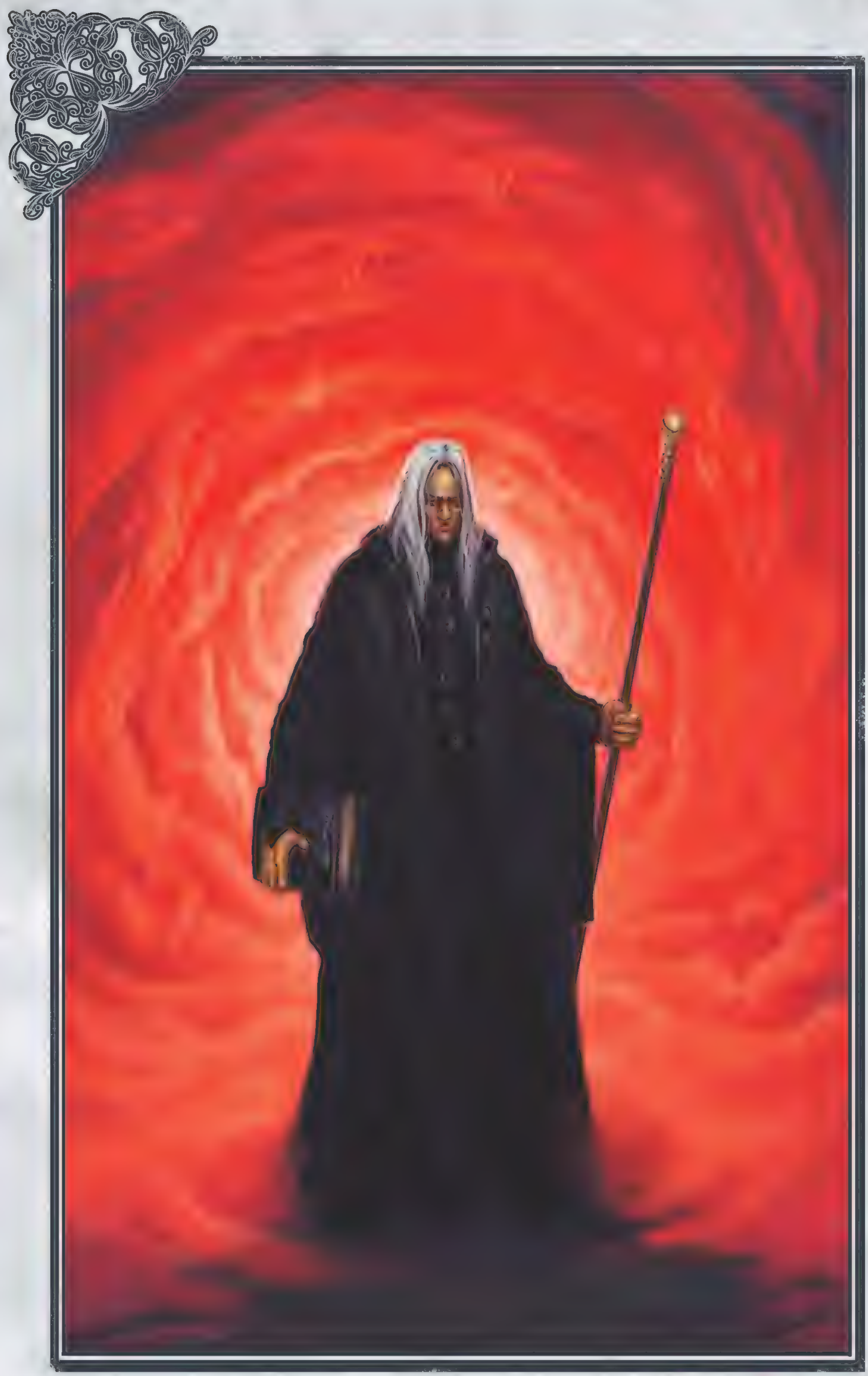
"they will not bother us, brother. we've been invited." the words ~~ raistlin's words, spoken seven years ago ~~ echoed in caramon's mind.

WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE! HURRY!

"you don't trust mages, brother?" raistlin amused voice filled caramon's head...

"...does that include me?"

Ελλάδα



Cover by Tyler Walpole

Then.

REST EASY, REVERED DAUGHTER. YOUR TRIALS ARE OVER.

YOU HAVE COME THROUGH THE GROVE SAFELY.

Raistlin's words washed over Crysania like a cool breeze.

She'd pledged to visit the mage in his Tower, and Crysania had made good on that promise...

...even though it meant passing through Shoikan Grove, a cursed forest that devoured all who dared enter it.

Except her.

The Revered Daughter of Paladine's faith -- and the charm Raistlin had given her -- had sustained her.

For even in the darkest places, Crysania knew, some light remained.

COME INSIDE, BUT STAY CLOSE.

THE TOWER CAN BE A DANGEROUS PLACE, EVEN FOR MY GUESTS.

Raistlin's study was nothing like Crysania had expected.

She'd imagined a chamber filled with bubbling potions, horrors called up from the Abyss, and other dark magics.

Instead the room was attractive and comfortable... almost cozy.

SIT, PLEASE.

POUR THE LADY A GLASS OF WINE, DALAMAR.

CERTAINLY, SHALAFI.

WHAT IS THIS *FRUIT?* I'VE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE.

INDEED NOT, SHALAFI HAS IT BROUGHT TO HIM FROM THE *ISLE OF MITHAS.*

MITHAS? THE HOME OF THE *MINOTAURS?* BUT THAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD!

THE SHALAFI'S HEALTH IS *DELICATE,* THERE ARE FEW THINGS HE CAN TOLERATE, AND HE WILL GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO GET THEM.

YES, HE'S DREADFULLY *FRAIL* ISN'T HE... AND THAT TERRIBLE COUGH...

OF COURSE... HIS *COUGH.*

AND NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'LL LEAVE YOU TO YOUR *CONVERSATION.*

THANK YOU.

WHAT MARVELOUS **HANDS** YOU HAVE. HOW SLENDER AND **SUPPLE** THE FINGERS ARE.

WHEN I WAS JUST A CHILD I WOULD **AMAZE** AND DELIGHT THE OTHER CHILDREN WITH THE **TRICKS** THESE HANDS COULD PERFORM, EVEN THEN.

IT WAS MY **ONE SKILL** AND IT KEPT THEM AMUSED. SOMETIMES IT KEPT THEM FROM **HURTING** ME.

I CAN PICTURE **YOUR CHILDHOOD**, REVERED DAUGHTER: RICH, SHELTERED, PROTECTED, **LIKED**.

HOW DIFFERENT FROM **MY OWN**. MY NICKNAME WAS THE SLY ONE. I WAS SICKLY AND WEAK. AND **TOO SMART**.

BUT SOME DAY, I VOWED, I WOULD RISE TO GREATNESS USING MY ONE GIFT. MY **MAGIC**.

THIS IS THE **PRICE** I PAID FOR MY POWER.

BUT THIS POWER IS **EVIL**.

IS IT? IS **AMBITION** EVIL? IS THE QUEST FOR POWER, FOR **CONTROL** OVER OTHERS EVIL?

IF SO, LADY CRYSANIA, YOU MAY AS WELL EXCHANGE YOUR WHITE ROBES FOR **BLACK**.

HOW **DARE** YOU?! I DON'T--

BUT YOU **DO**. YOU WOULDN'T HAVE RISEN TO YOUR POSITION IN THE CHURCH WITHOUT **AMBITION**, AND DESIRE FOR POWER.

HAVEN'T YOU ALWAYS SAID TO YOURSELF THAT THERE IS SOMETHING **GREAT** YOU'RE DESTINED TO DO? TO SHAPE THE WORLD, MOLD IT, CONTROL IT.

IS **THAT** EVIL, LADY CRYSANIA?

*No, it **wasn't evil**, not the way he spoke of it, but something wasn't **right**... Crysania couldn't think, she was too confused.*

*All that kept running through her mind was: **How alike we are, he and I!***

PERHAPS I DO HAVE THOSE ***DESIRES***, BUT, IF SO, MY AMBITION IS NOT FOR MYSELF, BUT FOR ***OTHERS***, AND THE ***CHURCH***.

AS FOR POWER, IT IS THE POWER OF ***GOOD***, THE POWER OF PALADINE, THAT DROVE AWAY EVIL IN THE WORLD--

DROVE AWAY EVIL?

WHY YES--

BUT EVIL AND SUFFERING ***STILL REMAIN*** IN THE WORLD.

BECAUSE OF SUCH AS ***YOU!***

AH, NO, REVERED DAUGHTER, NOT THROUGH ANY ACT OF MINE.

IT IS NOT I WHO KEEP THE GULLY DWARVES LIVING IN ***SQUALOR***, CAST OFF BY THE OTHER RACES.

IT IS NOT I WHO ALLOW THE WILDER ELVES TO BE ***ENSLAVED*** BY THEIR OWN PEOPLE.

IT IS NOT I WHO FORCE HUMANS TO EKE OUT A ***WRETCHED EXISTENCE*** IN LANDS WHERE RAIN HAS CEASED TO FALL.

AND IT IS NOT I WHO AMASSES GREAT WEALTH AT THE ***EXPENSE*** OF THOSE WHO TRUST ME, AS SOME OF YOUR ***WHITE ROBED BROTHERS*** DO.

IF THAT'S HAPPENING, IF ***ELISTAN*** KNEW--

HE KNOWS. AND SO DO ***YOU***, REVERED DAUGHTER.

WE ARE NOT **SO DIFFERENT**, I LIVE IN MY TOWER, DEVOTING MYSELF TO MY **STUDIES**...

...YOU LIVE IN YOUR TOWER, DEVOTING YOURSELF TO YOUR **FAITH**. AND THE WORLD TURNS AROUND US.

AND THAT'S **TRUE EVIL**, TO SIT AND DO **NOTHING**.

NOW YOU **UNDERSTAND!** NO LONGER AM I CONTENT TO WATCH!

I WILL MAKE A **DIFFERENCE**, CRYSANIA. I WILL CHANGE THE WORLD! THAT IS MY PLAN!

NO, RAISTLIN! YOU MUST NOT GO THROUGH WITH IT! PALADINE--

PALADINE WILL NOT STOP ME, FOR I SEEK TO DEPOSE HIS **GREATEST ENEMY**.

LISTEN, I WILL MAKE IT **CLEAR**...

He told her his plans, then.

Told her of the wonders of his magic, and of the magic now lost... the wonders discovered by Fistandantilus.

And when Raistlin was done, Crysania found she couldn't speak -- couldn't even move -- at once horrified and awestruck.

PERHAPS PALADINE DIDN'T SEND YOU TO **STOP ME**, LADY CRYSANIA.

PERHAPS HE SENT YOU TO **HELP**.

Now.

Crysania had been in the **Tower of High Sorcery** for more than a day, yet still she hadn't moved... hadn't even **blinked.**

The girl's body lived, but her **soul** had been taken. And whether it could be **restored,** Par-Salian didn't know.

These days, there was **too much** he didn't know.

The **Tower of High Sorcery in Wayreth Forest** was one of Krynn's last magical strongholds.

Home to mages wearing robes of white, red and black, all working **together...**

...united by the art of **magic.**

It was life. It was death. It was **beyond death.**

Par-Salian was **Master of the Conclave,** and for many years he'd been the most powerful wizard in all the world.

But now, perhaps, that honor belonged to another: **Raistlin Majere.**

The man Par-Salian had helped to **create.** The one who may destroy them **all.**

WHAT **IS** THIS PLACE?!

SSSSSSH! IT'S THE *HALL OF MAGES* OR... OR SOMETHING.

WHO ARE *THOSE PEOPLE?*

THEY... *WE* ARE THE *CONCLAVE.*

PAR-SALIAN, DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

YES, *CARAMON MAJERE,* I REMEMBER YOU.

I BROUGHT HER HERE HOPING YOU COULD *HELP HER.* CAN YOU? WILL SHE BE ALL RIGHT?

IT IS *BEYOND* OUR SKILL TO CARE FOR HER. IN ORDER TO PROTECT HER FROM THE *DEATH KNIGHT'S SPELL...*

...PALADINE HEARD HER LAST PRAYER AND SENT HER SOUL TO DWELL IN HIS *PEACEFUL REALMS.*

IT'S *MY FAULT.* I-I FAILED HER. I MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE--

TO PROTECT HER? NO, WARRIOR, YOU COULD NOT HAVE PROTECTED HER FROM THE *KNIGHT OF THE BLACK ROSE.*

DO NOT BLAME YOURSELF, AND DO NOT GIVE UP *HOPE.* THERE MAY STILL BE A WAY TO *RESTORE* HER SOUL.

BUT FIRST, TELL ME **WHY** LADY CRYSANIA SOUGHT US OUT? WHY WAS SHE SEARCHING FOR WAYRETH?

SHE CAME BECAUSE OF **RAISTLIN!**

WHAT DOES A CLERIC OF **GOOD** HAVE TO DO WITH YOUR BROTHER? WHY WOULD SHE UNDERTAKE THIS JOURNEY FOR **HIS SAKE?**

I... I DON'T KNOW.

YOU KNOW OF HIS **EVIL?**

YOU KNOW THAT NOW WE BELIEVE HE INTENDS TO **CONQUER THE WORLD?**

ALONG WITH YOUR HALF-SISTER KITIARA, RAISTLIN HAS BEGUN TO AMASS **ARMIES.** HE HAS DRAGONS, FLYING CITADELS.

AND IN ADDITION WE KNOW--

YOU KNOW **NOTHING,** GREAT ONE. YOU'RE A **FOOL!**

EXPLAIN YOURSELF, DALAMAR. **WHY** AM I A FOOL?

THE WORLD MEANS **NOTHING** TO HIM! HE COULD HAVE THE WORLD **TOMORROW NIGHT** IF HE WANTED IT.

THEN WHAT **DOES** HE WANT?

HE WANTS TO BECOME A *GOD.*

HE WILL CHALLENGE THE *QUEEN OF DARKNESS* HERSELF. THAT IS HIS PLAN.

I THINK YOU *OVER-ESTIMATE* HIM.

IS *THIS* OVER-ESTIMATING HIM?!

YOU SEE THE MARK OF *HIS HAND* UPON ME! EVEN NOW THE *PAIN* IS ALMOST MORE THAN I CAN BEAR!

HE SAID TO GIVE YOU HIS *REGARDS,* PAR-SALIAN!

OUR WORST FEARS ARE REALIZED, HE KNOWS *WE SENT* YOU.

HE'S KNOWN ALL ALONG. HE'S BEEN USING ME -- *USING US* -- TO FURTHER HIS OWN ENDS.

AND NOW HE PREPARES TO JOURNEY *BACK IN TIME,* TO THE DAYS JUST PRIOR TO THE CATACLYSM...

...WHEN *FISTANDANTILUS* WAS AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS POWER.

MY SHALAFI INTENDS TO *STUDY* WITH THE GREAT MAGE AND LEARN HOW TO CROSS THE *THRESHOLD* BETWEEN GOD AND MEN.

ENOUGH!

TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON OR I'LL **TEAR** THIS PLACE DOWN AROUND YOUR **MISERABLE HEADS!**

WHO'S FISTANDANTILUS? WHAT DOES HE WANT WITH **MY BROTHER?!**

CARAMON, DON'T--

NO, KENDERKEN, I UNDERSTAND HIS ANGER AND HIS **SORROW.** I OWE HIM AN **EXPLANATION.**

SEVEN YEARS AGO, **PALADINE** WARNED ME THAT THE DARK QUEEN WAS PLANNING TO WAGE **WAR** UPON KRYNN.

"ONE AMONG YOUR ORDER YOU WILL CHOOSE TO HELP **FIGHT** THIS EVIL," THE GREAT GOD TOLD ME.

"CHOOSE WELL, FOR THIS PERSON SHALL BE A **SWORD** TO CLEAVE THE DARKNESS. YOU MAY TELL HIM NOTHING OF WHAT THE **FUTURE HOLDS...**

...FOR BY HIS DECISIONS, AND THE **DECISIONS** OF **OTHERS**, YOUR WORLD WILL STAND OR FALL FOREVER."

I CHOSE **RAISTLIN.**

WHY?

BECAUSE HE IS **GIFTED** WITH MAGIC, BECAUSE HE IS INTELLIGENT, AND COURAGEOUS, AND **FEARS NOTHING.**

AND BECAUSE I KNEW HIS **AMBITION** -- HIS THIRST FOR POWER -- MIGHT **BENEFIT** THE WORLD, EVEN IF **HE** SHOULD CHOOSE TO TURN HIS BACK UPON IT.

BUT FIRST HE HAD TO TAKE ***THE TEST***. AND I-I ***FORGOT*** FISTANDANTILUS.

THE ***DEAD*** WIZARD.

NOT DEAD, NOT ***HIM***. HIS MAGIC WAS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO ***DEFEAT DEATH*** ITSELF. HE MOVED TO ANOTHER PLANE OF EXISTENCE.

FOR CENTURIES, FISTANDANTILUS BIDED HIS TIME, SEARCHING FOR A BODY TO ***ACCEPT*** HIS SOUL.

AND HE FOUND THAT BODY... IN YOUR ***BROTHER***.

WHO KNOWS HE WHAT ***DEAL*** THE TWO MADE DURING THE TEST? BUT IN THE END, RAISTLIN SURVIVED, AT A ***PRICE***.

IT WAS NOT ANY OF US WHO LEFT YOUR BROTHER WITH ***GOLD-TINTED SKIN***, CARAMON.

SO... SO THIS FISTANDANTILUS ***TOOK OVER*** RAISTLIN'S SOUL? HE'S THE ONE THAT ***MADE*** RAIST TAKE THE BLACK ROBES?

YOUR BROTHER MADE HIS ***OWN CHOICE***. AS DID WE ALL.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT! YOU'RE ***LYING! YOU*** DID THIS TO RAIST!

WELL, IF HE CAN GO BACK IN TIME, SO CAN ***I!*** I'LL FIND THIS FISTANDANTILUS AND I'LL ***KILL HIM!***

THEN RAIST WILL BE... HE'LL BE ***RAIST*** AGAIN.

AND HE'LL FORGET ALL THIS BEING A ***GOD*** NON-SENSE!

HMMM... THAT'S CERTAINLY SOMETHING HE ***WOULDN'T EXPECT***.

HA HA HA! OF COURSE HE EXPECTS IT!

YOU WILL SEND LADY CRYSANIA BACK IN TIME TO THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN HEAL HER: ***THE KINGPRIEST.***

AND YOU'LL EVEN PROVIDE HER WITH A ***BODYGUARD***, MY SHALAFI'S OWN BROTHER. THIS IS WHAT HE ***WANTS!***

BUT WHY LADY CRYSANIA? WHAT POSSIBLE ***INTEREST*** COULD HE HAVE IN ONE SO GOOD, SO ***PURE***--

BECAUSE ONLY ONE WHO HAS DEVOTED HER LIFE TO ***GOOD*** CAN JOIN WITH RAISTLIN AND OPEN THE ***DARK DOOR***.

HE ***NEEDS*** THE CLERIC AND SHE... SHE IS ***DRAWN*** TO HIM AS A MOTH IS DRAWN TO A FLAME.

SHE SPENT THE NIGHT IN HIS STUDY, AND HIS LAST WORDS TO HER WERE: "PERHAPS PALADINE DIDN'T SEND YOU TO ***STOP ME***, LADY CRYSANIA...

...PERHAPS HE SENT YOU TO ***HELP.***"

AND WHAT ***ANSWER*** DID SHE MAKE?

NONE. SHE LEFT THE TOWER WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD.

WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS WHY LADY CRYSANIA WOULD TRAVEL ***HERE*** TO SEEK OUR HELP IN SENDING HER BACK?

SURELY SHE MUST HAVE KNOWN WE WOULD ***REFUSE*** SUCH A REQUEST.

I CAN ANSWER THAT!

SEE, I MET CRYSANIA IN PALANTHAS, WHEN SHE WAS VISITING MY FRIEND, ***TANIS HALF-ELVEN.***

SHE WAS ASKING ALL ***SORTS*** OF QUESTIONS ABOUT RAISTLIN, AND I TOLD HER LOTS OF ***STORIES*** ABOUT HIM.

CRYSANIA SAID THAT IF SHE COULD JUST FIND ***BUPU*** SHE COULD CONVINCE THE MAGES RAISTLIN WAS STILL ***GOOD***, AND--

BUPU? WHO IS ***BUPU?***

I BUPU.

WE MET HER IN XAK TSAROTH AND SHE SORT OF... ***FELL IN LOVE*** WITH RAISTLIN.

SOME OF US THOUGHT IT WAS ***FUNNY***, I GUESS. BUT HE DIDN'T. HE WAS REALLY ***KIND*** TO HER.

RAISTLIN OBVIOUSLY ***CHARMED*** THE CREATURE--

ME NO ***CREATURE!***

ME KNOW NOTHING 'BOUT BIG, POWERFUL WIZARDS, BUT ME KNOW MAN YOU TALKING 'BOUT HERE IS ***NICE MAN!***

THE OTHERS -- THE BIG MAN, THE KINDER -- THEY ***LAUGH*** AT BUPU. THEY LOOK AT ME LIKE ME SOME SORT OF ***BUG!***

ME KNOW HOW ME ***LOOK***, ME KNOW ME NOT ***PRETTY*** LIKE LADY LYING THERE!

BUT... BUT HIM NOT CALL ME ***"CREATURE"***. HIM CALL ME ***"LITTLE ONE"***.

HIM NEVER LAUGH AT ME. ***NEVER.***

FORGIVE ME, BUPU. RAISTLIN WOULD NEVER LAUGH AT YOU, LITTLE ONE.

HE KNEW, HE REMEMBERED. THERE WERE TOO MANY WHO HAD LAUGHED AT HIM.

PERHAPS LADY CRYSANIA WAS RIGHT.

PERHAPS THERE IS SOME GOOD IN RAISTLIN YET.

WOULD YOU UNDERTAKE THIS PERILOUS JOURNEY, CARAMON? DO YOU LOVE YOUR BROTHER ENOUGH TO GO BACK ON A QUEST TO SAVE HIS SOUL?

I DO.

THEN SO BE IT.

Later...

THIS IS **MADNESS**, PAR-SALIAN!

EVEN YOU CANNOT BE SOFT-HEARTED OR **SOFT-HEADED** ENOUGH TO SEND THAT STUPID HUMAN BACK IN TIME TO TRY AND STOP **FISTANDANTILUS!**

THINK OF THE **DANGER!** HE COULD CHANGE HISTORY! WE COULD ALL CEASE TO **EXIST!**

BAH! LADONNA, **YOU THINK!** TIME IS A GREAT FLOWING **RIVER**, THROW A PEBBLE INTO THE RUSHING WATER...

...DOES IT **STOP?** DOES IT FLOW **BACKWARDS?** OF COURSE NOT. THE PEBBLE CREATES A FEW RIPPLES AND **SINKS.**

CARAMON AND CRYSANIA ARE **PEBBLES**, THEY WILL NO MORE AFFECT THE FLOW OF TIME THAN TWO ROCKS THROWN IN THE THON-TSALARIAN.

RAISTLIN **WILL** GAIN THE MAGIC HE'S SEEKING, IN THAT WE CANNOT STOP HIM. BUT HE NEEDS THE **CLERIC.**

THAT IS WHY WE **MUST** SEND HER BACK IN TIME.

I FAIL TO SEE--

SHE MUST **DIE**, LADONNA!

CRYSANIA MUST BE SENT BACK TO A TIME WHEN **ALL CLERICS** PASSED FROM THIS LAND.

THEN KEEP HER *HERE.*

HE WOULD SIMPLY *RETURN* FOR HER, AND BY THEN HE'LL HAVE THE *MAGIC*. WE WON'T BE ABLE TO STOP HIM.

PERHAPS *PALADINE* WILL--

NO, THE AUGURY I CAST WAS *NEUTRAL*. PALADINE HAS LEFT THE MATTER IN *OUR HANDS*.

SO YOU REALLY *WILL* SEND HER TO HER DEATH. YOUR WHITE ROBES WILL BE STAINED RED WITH *BLOOD*, MY OLD FRIEND.

I DON'T *ENJOY* THIS, DAMN IT! BUT WHAT ELSE CAN I *DO?*

WHAT SAY YOU, *JUSTARIUS?*

OH, I AGREE PAR-SALIAN, YOUR WAY IS THE *ONLY WAY*. I'VE THOUGHT THAT FROM THE START.

TO BE HONEST, I'M MORE INTERESTED IN THE *SPELL*.

SEE FOR YOURSELF?

"THE ABILITY TO *TRAVEL BACK IN TIME* IS AVAILABLE TO ELVES, HUMANS AND OGRES, THE RACES CREATED BY THE GODS AT THE BEGINNING OF TIME.

THE SPELL MAY *NOT* BE USED BY DWARVES, GNOMES, OR KENDER, SINCE THE CREATION OF THESE RACES WAS AN *ACCIDENT*."

"THE INTRODUCTION OF ANY OF THESE RACES INTO A PREVIOUS TIME SPAN COULD HAVE ***SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS*** ON THE PRESENT."

IT'S A SIMPLE ENOUGH SPELL.

THE DIFFICULT PART WILL BE CRAFTING A ***MAGICAL ITEM*** TO BRING CARAMON BACK TO THE ***PRESENT.***

THEN HE WILL NOT DIE WITH THE CLERIC?

NO. CARAMON... CARAMON IS MY ***REDEMPTION.***

HE'S GOING ON A JOURNEY TO SAVE A SOUL, BUT ***NOT*** HIS BROTHER'S.

THE TRUTH COULD ***DESTROY*** HIM.

THERE IS VERY LITTLE ***LEFT*** TO DESTROY, IF YOU ASK ME.

BE THAT AS IT MAY, I'LL HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE BLACK ROBES?

I WILL.

IT SEEMS WE HAVE NO CHOICE. IF YOU FAIL--

ENJOY MY ***DOWNFALL.***

Tasslehoff Burrfoot was bored.

And, as everyone knows, there's nothing more dangerous on Krynn than a bored kender.

The mage who'd shown Tas, Caramon and Bupu to their room had told them to stay put...

...but then he hadn't even locked the door. Which, in Tas's mind, was practically an invitation to go exploring.

In fact, few doors in the Tower were locked, which suited Tas just fine.

Though the wizards did have a bad habit of leaving their things lying around.

A few of which somehow managed to accidentally fall into Tas's pouch.

I'LL SEND YOU BACK TO THE HIGHPULP IF THAT'S WHERE YOU WANT TO GO.

BUT FIRST YOU MUST TELL ME *WHERE* THE HIGHPULP IS!

HIGHBULP! AND HIM AT HOME! I TELL YOU THAT ALREADY!

AND WHERE IS HOME?

THE PITT. SOME FANCY NAME, HUH? THAT HIGHBULP'S IDEA.

HIM ATE BOOK ONCE. LEARNED LOTS. ALL RIGHT HERE.

WHAT DO HUMANS CALL YOUR HOME?

SKROTH. STUPID NAME.

YOU NOT NICE, NONE OF THEM NICE. NOT LIKE MY PRETTY MAN.

TIME TO GO HOME.

HIM NOT LAUGH... HIM CALL ME "LITTLE ONE".

HIM--

ZAK!

SKROTH... XAK TSAROTH? YES, I REMEMBER THE KENDER SAID IT IN THE CONCLAVE.

NOW, WHERE'S THE KENDER?

BUPU'S GONE, AND I'M *NEXT!*

CARAMON! I MUST FIND *TASSLEHOFF.*

HUH? WH-WHY?

HE... NEVERMIND. THERE'S NO TIME.

BUT CARAMON *NEEDS ME!* THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT BAD SHAPE HE'S IN.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF HE DIDN'T HAVE *ME* ALONG TO DRAG HIM OUT OF BARS!

I'VE GOTTA HAVE *SOMETHING* IN HERE TO HELP ME HIDE! A MASK, OR A...

...A RING?

The ring didn't look magical, but then they never did.

The one that had teleported Tas into the heart of an evil wizard's palace had been covered in rust.

Still, there was no harm in asking for a little help.

PLEASE, *FIZBAN!* DON'T LET THEM SEND CARAMON OFF WITHOUT ME.

MAKE THIS A *RING OF INVISIBILITY.* OR AT LEAST A RING OF SOMETHING THAT WILL KEEP THEM FROM CATCHING ME!

WE MUST HURRY, PAR-SALIAN'S *WAITING.*

BUT WHAT ABOUT MY THINGS? MY *SWORD?*

YOU NEED NOT *WORRY* ABOUT ANY OF THAT. PART OF THE SPELL WILL SEE TO IT THAT YOU'RE *SUITABLY DRESSED* FOR THE PERIOD YOU JOURNEY WITHIN.

"It wasn't quite being invisible, but it'll do", thought Tas.

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WHEN I GET THERE? HOW'M I SUPPOSED TO GET **BACK**–

ALL THAT WILL BE EXPLAINED TO YOU. THOUGH, I WONDER... ARE YOU HAVING **DOUBTS?** SECOND THOUGHTS?

NO. IT'S **MY FAULT** LADY CRYSANIA'S HURT, I'LL TAKE HER BACK.

AND I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS FISTANDANTILUS FOR YOU.

I WISH I COULD SAY I THOUGHT YOUR BROTHER WAS **WORTH** IT.

HE IS. YOU'LL SEE.

I PRAY TO GILEAN YOU'RE RIGHT.

FAREWELL, CARAMON.

It had been hard for Tas to keep up with Caramon. Being a mouse was tougher than he'd imagined.

Though it did allow him to squeeze into all sorts of interesting places.

Tas was glad to see Caramon didn't look scared anymore.

In fact, he looked calm. Like he was completely at home.

Par-Salian gave Caramon a fascinating looking scepter that Tas was desperate to examine...

...then they talked in voices too low for him to hear.

SANDOR TOTH!

The entire room began to shake, drowning out Par-Salian's voice.

Any sane person would have been terrified.

THMMM

It was only as he finished his spell that the mage heard a tiny voice.

TOTH SANDOR!

DON'T LEAVE ME, CARAMON!

YOU KNOW WHAT TROUBLE YOU'LL GET INTO WITHOUT ME!

NO!

THAKOOM!!

Weak and exhausted, Par-Salian's last thought before he collapsed into unconsciousness was a terrible one:

He'd sent a kender back in time.

It was a beautiful day in Istar.

"We are the heart of the universe", the Kingpriest would say.

"Istar, city beloved by the gods, is the center of the universe. And our Temple -- being at the heart of the city -- is therefore the heart of the universe."

Denubis didn't care for such talk. to him it seemed blasphemous.

Besides, he knew that even in the Temple, a place of glory and light, some darkness remained.

YOU CALLED ME, DARK ONE?

I'M SORRY TO DISTURB YOU, DENUBIS, BUT AN EVENT OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IS HAPPENING WHILE WE SPEAK.

*The mage's words sent a **chill** down Denubis's spine.*

*Though all other mages had been **banished** from Istar, this one remained as a **guest** of the Kingpriest.*

*He was not like the rest, he was powerful. Too **powerful** to be kept out of the city by sword or **spell**.*

***Fistandantilus** came and went as he pleased.*

TAKE A SQUADRON OF THE TEMPLE GUARDS AND GO TO THE MARKET-PLACE.

THERE YOU WILL FIND A REVERED DAUGHTER OF PALADINE NEAR DEATH.

AND THERE ALSO, YOU WILL FIND THE MAN WHO ASSAULTED HER.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS?

I KNOW. LET THAT BE ENOUGH FOR YOU.

HURRY, DENUBIS. SHE WILL NOT LIVE LONG.

Elsewhere...

TASSLEHOFF?!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

HUH? WHAT?

I MEAN, ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE HERE?

OF COURSE I'M SUPPOSED TO BE HERE. YOU DON'T THINK THEY'D LET YOU COME BACK BY YOURSELF DO YOU?

I'M NOT SURE, BUT I DON'T THINK--

WELL I'M HERE. THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.

LOOK AT IT, CARAMON!

ISTAR!

I SHOULD PROBABLY MAKE A MAP--

TAS! HELP!

IT'S CRYSANIA! SHE'S HURT!

WHAT? DID THE MAGIC GO WRONG?

I DON'T KNOW.

YOU STAY HERE, I'LL FIND A GUARD.

HALT!

OH, HI! WE WERE JUST LOOKING FOR--

PALADINE SAVE ME! THE DARK ONE SPOKE TRUE!

SEIZE HIM!

W-WAIT!

UGH! THIS ONE SMELLS LIKE HE'S BEEN LIVING IN A DOCKSIDE TAVERN.

THEY WON'T HURT HIM, WILL THEY? WHAT'S WRONG?

THEY WON'T HURT HIM IF HE COMES PEACEFULLY, THOUGH AFTER WHAT HE'S DONE...

...HE MIGHT FIND AN EASIER DEATH HERE.

LEAVE ME ALONE!

THUMP!

HN!

MAKE THEM STOP! THEY CAN'T DO THAT!

KRAK!

WE MUST CONVEY HER TO THE *TEMPLE* AT ONCE.

AND TAKE THESE TWO TO THE *PRISONS!*

YOU DON'T THINK... *NO!* CARAMON *DIDN'T HURT* CRYSANIA!

I DIDN'T! I *SWEAR!* I'M TRYING TO *HELP HER!*

THUNK!

LYING BASTARD!

PLEASE! HE'S TELLING THE *TRUTH!*

IF HE WERE--

HE'S *NOT.* DON'T TROUBLE YOURSELF, REVERED BROTHER.

THE *DRUNK* AND THE KENDER WILL GET WHAT'S *COMING* TO THEM.

The beautiful elven voices rose higher and higher, their sweet notes spiraling up toward heaven...

...but Denubis was too lost in worry to hear them.

The Revered Daughter's injuries seemed minor at first glance, but she hadn't spoken or moved during their journey to the Temple...

...it was as if she'd suffered some sort of fit.

And there was only one man on all Krynn who could heal a wound of that sort:

The Kingpriest of Istar.

At the same time, on the outskirts of the city...

YOU KNOW, I REALLY THOUGHT ISTAR'S JAIL CELLS WOULD BE ***FANCIER.***

I MEAN, ALL THE STORIES ABOUT THIS PLACE MADE IT SEEM LIKE THE STREETS WERE PAVED WITH ***PLATINUM***...

...BUT THIS PRISON ISN'T ***THAT GREAT.*** THE ONE IN PAX THARKAS WAS ***NICER*** REMEMBER THAT, CARAMON?

I FAILED AGAIN... I'M ***CURSED***...

THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT! ***STAND UP!***

WE'VE BEEN ***ARRESTED!*** WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THEY ***EXECUTE*** US--

HAH!

EXECUTE? HASN'T BEEN AN EXECUTION IN ISTAR IN ***TEN YEARS.*** CHURCH FORBADE IT.

THEN WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO WITH US?

WE'LL BE ***SOLD.***

MOST OF US'LL END UP IN THE ***MINES,*** A FEW, LIKE YOUR BIG FRIEND, MIGHT MAKE ***THE GAMES.***

THE GAMES? WHAT ARE THOSE?

OH, YOU'LL SEE.

Caramon and Tas went on the ***auction block*** *later that day...*

...though the bidding was ***far*** *from fierce.*

HE'S OUT OF SHAPE, TOO ***FAT***. PLUS HE'S A DRUNK. AND HE DOESN'T LOOK ***MEAN***.

WHAT DID YOU SAY HE DID? ASSAULTED A CLERIC? ***HUMPF!*** THE ONLY THING HE COULD ASSAULT'D BE A ***WINE JUG!***

YOU'D BE PASSING UP THE CHANCE OF A ***LIFETIME***, ROCKBREAKER. PERHAPS HE'S OVERWEIGHT, BUT THAT'S ***EASILY CURED***.

HE'S BIG, ***STRONG***, AND HAS THOSE MELTING BROWN EYES THE LADIES ***LOVE***. HE'LL DRAW A CROWD.

ALRIGHT. I'LL ***TAKE HIM***.

AND I'LL THROW IN THE ***KENDER*** AT NO EXTRA CHARGE.

I DON'T ***WANT*** THE DAMN KENDER!

THEY'RE TO BE SOLD AS A ***SET***, I HAVE MY ORDERS.

FINE, WHAT DO I CARE? IT'S NOT ***MY MONEY***.

Crysania woke the next morning feeling as if her head were stuffed with cotton.

Dizzily she tried to piece together her thoughts. She remembered the kender, the fat warrior, a ghastly creature from beyond the grave, but then... nothing.

YOU'RE AWAKE!

PALADINE BE PRAISED!

YOU MUST BE THIRSTY, I'LL GET YOU SOMETHING TO DRINK. AND I MUST TELL THE KINGPRIEST!

K-KINGPRIEST? WHERE AM I?

THE TEMPLE, IN ISTAR.

It made no sense. Istar had been destroyed during the Cataclysm...

...and this was no Temple. It was far too lavish to be a place of worship.

And then she found the **note.**

ady Crysania,

knew you intended to seek my help in returning to the past in an effort to prevent Raistlin Majere, from carrying out the evil he plots. Upon your way to us, however, you were attacked by a Death Knight. To save you, Paladine took your soul to his heavenly dwelling. There are none among us now who can bring you back. Only those deities living at the time of the Kingpriest have this power. So we have sent you back in time to Istar, right before the Cataclysm, in the company of Raistlin's brother, Caramon. We send you to fulfill a twofold purpose. First, to heal you of your grievous wound and, second, to allow you to try to succeed in your efforts to save the young mage from himself.

If, in this, you see the workings of the gods, perhaps then you may consider your efforts blessed. I would counsel only this — that the gods work in ways strange to mortal men, since we can see only that part of the picture being painted around us. I had hoped to discuss this with you personally, before you left, but that proved impossible.

I can only caution you of one thing — beware of Raistlin. You are virtuous, steadfast in your faith, and proud of both your virtue and your faith. This is a deadly combination, my dear. He will take full advantage of it.

Remember this, too. You and Caramon have gone back in dangerous times. The days of the Kingpriest are numbered. Caramon is on a mission that could prove dangerous to [illegible] life.

But you, Crysania, are in danger of both your life and your soul. I foresee that you will be forced to choose — to save one, you must give up the other. There are many ways for you to leave this time period, one of which is through Caramon. May Paladine [illegible] with you.

Par-Salian
Order of the White Robes
The [illegible] of High Sorcery

Crysania re-read the note a dozen times before she **understood** it.

Par-Salian was right. Paladine's **intervention** had allowed her to come back to the past, proving the **righteousness** of her task.

But his comments about her faith and her **virtue**... well, the man was only a **mage**. What did **he** know of the gods?

All that mattered was that Crysania would have her chance to **save Raistlin.**

To save the **world.**

The **Arena** was the second largest building in all Istar, only the Kingpriest's Temple was bigger.

Though to the common people of the city, the Arena was far more **important**.

A decade ago, when the Church had **outlawed executions**, they'd been faced with a problem:

Without the **release** of a hanging or two, the people of Istar started to get **rowdy** -- bar fights, brawls, and **riots** became commonplace.

The priests didn't know what to do, but **Arack Rockbreaker** did.

"Bring back the **old Games**", he told them, "they'll **entertain** folk, and make them forget their troubles".

The priests had been **horrified** at first, but as Arack explained his plan, they began to come around.

His gladiators would be **criminals**, fighting carefully **choreographed** battles.

Their weapons **blunted**, their blood **fake**, and no one would die... barring the occasional **accident**.

Since then, Arack had trained **hundreds** of fighters...

...though none presented quite as big a **challenge** as Caramon.

First came a **strict diet**, one Caramon didn't much enjoy.

I'M NOT EATING THIS SLOP!

Though with **Raag** -- Arack's second in command -- encouraging him, the big man learned to like what he was **given**.

KRUNCH!

Arack didn't allow his fighters **alcohol** either, and as a result Caramon was **drink-sick** for a week.

When he was feeling better, Raag began **exercising** their newest acquisition.

A task the ogre took particular **pleasure** in.

FASTER!

The dwarf himself oversaw Caramon's **training**, and Arack had to admit the man knew how to use a **blade**.

He had potential to be good... maybe even a **champion**.

By his **second fortnight** at the Arena, Caramon was a man **transformed.**

And people began to take notice.

HE ***MUST*** WIN! I COULDN'T ***BEAR*** TO SEE HIM LOSE!

HE ***WILL*** WIN, HE WAS ***MEANT*** TO WIN! HE LOOKS LIKE A VICTOR!

AYE, THAT'S HOW I'LL ***BILL 'IM.*** NEVER DEFEATED! DOESN'T KNOW ***HOW*** TO LOSE!

VOWED TO TAKE HIS OWN ***LIFE*** IF ANYONE EVER BEAT HIM!

NO!

DON'T TELL US ***THAT!***

SEE, RAAG? HE'S A ***HEART-BREAKER!***

THEY'LL COME FROM ***MILES AROUND*** TO SEE HIM. TO SEE...

"...THE VICTOR!"

That night...

IS THIS THE *MAGICAL ITEM* PAR-SALIAN GAVE YOU? CAN I TRY IT?

NO.

OH... OKAY.

I HEARD THE CLERICS TALKING ABOUT *FISTANDANTILUS* AT THE TEMPLE TODAY.

I GUESS HE WAS GONE FOR A WHILE, BUT HE'S BACK NOW. THEY SAY HE APPEARED IN A BIG FLASH OF SMOKE. VERY DRAMATIC.

HE'S IN THE CITY?

YEAH, WHY?

BECAUSE THIS IS OUR CHANCE, IT'S *TIME*.

TIME? TIME FOR *WHAT?*

TO *MURDER* FISTANDANTILUS.

Next: *Fates Intertwined*

目录

Cover by Tyler Walpole

The largest crowd Istar had ever seen turned out for the opening of the Games that season.

Many of them hoping to get a glimpse of the Arena's much heralded new fighter...

...the Victor.

I FEEL RIDICULOUS.

IT'S JUST A COSTUME, WE ALL HAVE TO WEAR THEM.

AT LEAST YOURS COVERS SOMETHING, PHERAGAS! LOOK AT ME--

OH, I AM. AND SO WILL THE WOMEN OUT THERE. ARACK ALWAYS SAYS THE MORE FLESH THE BETTER.

THE MORE FLESH, AND THE MORE BLOOD.

KNAAA!

THAT'S THE SIGNAL. WE'RE ON.

The first thing Caramon noticed as he stepped out into the Arena was the noise.

The crowd's cheers crashed over him in thunderous waves, one after the other, as every man, woman and child screamed his name.

VICTOR!

VICTOR!

VICTOR!

Arack had paired Caramon with Pheragas and Kiiri, two veteran gladiators who could be counted on to cover for any mistakes he might make.

This was Caramon's first real bout, and while the outcome was predetermined, and he'd practiced every move for weeks...

...that didn't make him any less nervous.

RAAAH!

The Barbarian attacked on cue. Caramon dodged...

...and countered with his fake sword.

And so the entertainment began.

HNNH!

SPLUT!

The crowd went silent as Caramon struggled beneath the massive Barbarian.

*But this too, was all part of the **show**.*

BARBARIAN?

N-NO...

VICTOR!

BARBARIAN?!

VICTOR!

VICTOR!

IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE *FAKE!* THE FIGHT, THE *DAGGER!*

YOU TOLD ME NO ONE GOT KILLED!

IT WAS AN *ACCIDENT.*

ACCIDENTS HAPPEN AROUND HERE. PARTICULARLY TO PEOPLE WHO AREN'T *CAREFUL.* THEY COULD HAPPEN TO *YOU*, OR THAT LITTLE KENDER FRIEND OF YOURS.

NOW, THE BARBARIAN, HE WASN'T CAREFUL. OR RATHER, HIS *MASTER* WASN'T CAREFUL.

THIS MAN DIED BECAUSE HIS OWNER CROSSED SOMEONE?

YEAH. *CIVILIZED*, AIN'T IT? NOT LIKE THE OLD DAYS. AND NO ONE'S THE WISER.

I SAW HIS MASTER'S FACE WHEN YOU STABBED THE BARBARIAN. HE GOT THE MESSAGE.

WHO ORDERED THIS MAN KILLED? *WHO?!*

YOUR OWNER, THE *MAGE.*

FISTANDANTILUS.

When Tas returned from his wanderings that evening, Caramon told him what had happened...

...and who controlled their fates. News that put both of them in a black mood.

FISTANDANTILUS PLANNED THIS.

HE SENT ME HERE TO *DIE*, AND WHEN I DO, RAISTLIN WILL NEVER SUSPECT A THING. IT'LL BE JUST ANOTHER *ACCIDENT*.

ALL THE TIME, *EVERY FIGHT* FROM NOW ON, I'LL WONDER. IS THAT DAGGER KIIRI HOLDS *REAL?*

WE COULD RUN.

TO WHERE? FISTANDANTILUS IS THE *MOST POWERFUL* MAGIC USER WHO EVER LIVED. EVEN *KENDER* CAN'T HIDE FROM PEOPLE LIKE THAT.

NO, THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY. I'D HOPED TO HAVE A FEW MORE WEEKS TO *PLAN*, BUT WE CAN'T WAIT.

I HAVE TO *KILL FISTANDANTILUS*.

I CAN GET US INSIDE THE TEMPLE.

I CAN GET US IN *TONIGHT*.

THERE ARE *NO* GUARDS?

THERE NEVER ARE. THE KINGPREIST SAYS THE *GODS* PROTECT ALL WHO LIVE IN THE TEMPLE.

THAT'S *FISTANDANTILUS'S* ROOM. I OVERHEARD TWO PRIESTS TALKING ABOUT IT LAST WEEK.

NO ONE EVER COMES HERE.

GOOD.

NOT *ALL* OF THEM.

B-BY THE GODS! HOW--?!

HELLO, MY BROTHER.

THIS WAS TRULY ***STUPID***, CARAMON. YOU THOUGHT TO JUST WALTZ IN AND MURDER FISTANDANTILUS IN HIS SLEEP?!

I-I WAS GOING TO DO IT... ***FOR YOU.***

OF COURSE YOU WERE. WHY DID YOU EVER DO ANYTHING, EXCEPT ***FOR ME.***

WELL, YOU'RE ***LATE***, MY BROTHER. FISTANDANTILUS IS DEAD, BY ***MY HAND.***

WHAT?

HE WAS SURPRISED TO SEE ME, AND HE MOCKED ME, AS HE MOCKED ME IN THE ***TOWER.***

BUT I COULD SEE ***FEAR*** IN HIS EYES.

SO, ***LITTLE MAGE***, AND HOW DID YOU GET HERE? DID THE GREAT PAR-SALIAN SEND YOU?

I CAME ON ***MY OWN.*** I AM THE MASTER OF THE TOWER NOW.

IMPOSSIBLE. I AM THE ONE WHOSE COMING THE PROPHECY FORETOLD.

I AM THE MASTER OF PAST AND PRESENT.

THE PROPHECY DIDN'T WORK AS YOU'D HOPED, OLD FRIEND.

YOU INTENDED TO TRAVEL FROM PAST TO PRESENT USING MY LIFE FORCE TO KEEP YOU ALIVE.

IT WAS YOU WHO HELPED ME IN MY TEST, YOU WHO TAUGHT ME TO USE THE DRAGON ORB, AND YOU WHO BESEECHED THE DARK QUEEN TO GIVE ME THE KEY TO UNLOCK THE ANCIENT MAGICAL TEXTS.

YOU THOUGHT TO KEEP ME WEAK AND FRAIL, BUT I FOUGHT YOU, AND HERE I AM.

I AM THE MASTER OF THE PRESENT, SOON TO BECOME MASTER OF THE PAST.

I KILLED HIM. IT WAS A BITTER BATTLE.

AND I'VE BEEN HERE SINCE, STUDYING HIS SPELLS, INCREASING MY OWN POWER.

BUT HOW? YOU LEFT THE SAME DAY I DID.

WE LEFT AT THE SAME TIME BROTHER, BUT TO DIFFERENT DESTINATIONS. YOU'VE BEEN HERE A FEW MONTHS, I'VE BEEN IN THE PAST MUCH LONGER. I--

RAISTLIN!

HI! THIS IS A SURPRISE!

T-TASSLEHOFF?!

WHY DID PAR-SALIAN SEND *YOU?*

WELL, HE... UM... IT WAS SORT OF AN *ACCIDENT.*

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? A *KINDER*... BY ALL THE LAWS OF MAGIC *FORBIDDEN* TO TRAVEL THROUGH TIME!

DOES THIS MEAN THE COURSE OF HISTORY CAN BE *ALTERED?* BY *HIM?* IS THIS HOW THEY PLOT TO *STOP ME?*

I CAN DO *WHAT?*

WAIT! *WAIT!* IF YOU'VE BEEN HERE FOR SO LONG, IT WAS *YOU* WHO BOUGHT US!

YOU MADE THEM THINK I'D *HURT CRYSANIA! YOU* GOT ME SENT TO THE *ARENA!* WHY, RAIST?

WHAT POSSIBLE *USE* COULD YOU BE TO ME IN THE CONDITION YOU WERE IN WHEN YOU CAME HERE?

I NEED A *STRONG WARRIOR* WHERE WE'RE GOING NEXT, NOT A *FAT DRUNK.*

GOING *NEXT?*

MY *COUNSEL* IS MINE TO KEEP. YOU'LL KNOW WHEN THE TIME COMES.

NOW, I'M VERY *TIRED* MY BROTHER, LEAVE ME TO MY REST. AND REMEMBER THE *DATE.*

WHAT ABOUT IT?

IT'S YULE IN THE YEAR 962.

THE *CATACLYSM* IS BUT A FEW DAYS AWAY.

At the same time, in another part of the vast **Temple**...

DENUBIS, DO YOU... DO YOU THINK THE CHURCH IS... WHAT IT *SHOULD BE?*

*Crysania had spent weeks working up the **courage** to ask that question.*

*At first, she'd **reveled** in the Temple and the Kingpriest's power, but as time passed, and her knowledge grew, so too did her **doubts**.*

I... WHAT DO YOU MEAN, MY DEAR? THE KINGPRIEST MAY NOT BE PERFECT, BUT HE'S *ERADICATING EVIL.*

IT'S JUST... I SOMETIMES WONDER IF WE'RE LIKE *CHILDREN* LEFT ALONE IN THE HOUSE AT NIGHT, WHO LIGHT CANDLE AFTER *CANDLE* TO KEEP AWAY THE DARKNESS.

WE DON'T SEE THE DARKNESS HAS A *PURPOSE* AND SO, IN OUR TERROR, WE END UP *BURNING* THE HOUSE DOWN.

DO YOU KNOW THAT THE KINGPRIEST HAS PROPOSED *RIDDING* THE WORLD OF THE OGRE RACES?

OGRES ARE MURDEROUS, *VILLAINOUS--*

AND CREATED BY THE *GODS*, JUST AS WE WERE. DO WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO DESTROY *ANYTHING* THE GODS CREATED?

I CAME HERE CONVINCED THAT THE CHURCH WAS EVERYTHING *GOOD* AND TRUE, AND NOW I... I...

DON'T FEEL *ASHAMED* OF YOUR QUESTIONING, CHILD. GO TALK TO THE KINGPRIEST. HE HAS MORE *WISDOM* THAN I.

DO YOU THINK--

CERTAINLY. HE WILL ANSWER YOUR DOUBTS.

I WILL, *THANK YOU*, DENUBIS!

BLESS YOU, CHILD.

THAT LIGHT? WHA--?!

MY NAME IS **LORALON**, AND I HAVE COME FOR YOU, DENUBIS.

L-LORALON! THE GREATEST OF THE **ELVEN CLERICS!**

SURELY YOU SEEK THE **KING-PRIEST.**

NO, THERE IS ONLY **ONE** IN THIS TEMPLE I SEEK. THE LAST TRUE, **UNCORRUPTED** CLERIC IN ALL ISTAR.

COME WITH ME, DENUBIS.

BUT WHY?

*And then Denubis **knew**. Paladine gave his cleric insight. He saw the **future**.*

NO. THAT'S TOO DREADFUL.

ALL IS NOT DECIDED. THE SCALES ARE **TIPPING**, BUT THEY HAVE NOT YET BEEN UPSET. THIS JOURNEY MAY ONLY BE **TEMPORARY**.

COME, DENUBIS, YOU ARE NEEDED HERE NO LONGER.

Crysania hurried to the Kingpriest's audience chamber, where the great man's holy power washed over her.

Crysania's heartbeat slowed, and the tension drained from her. Everything suddenly seemed right with the world.

Still, Elistan's words echoed in her mind: "Do not go to others for answers. instead, look in your own heart, search your own faith".

THERE ARE ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS, REVERED DAUGHTER.

WHAT? WHO ARE YOU?

DO YOU NOT RECOGNIZE ME, CRYSANIA?

RAISTLIN?!

YES AND NO. HERE, I AM CALLED FISTANDANTILUS.

THAT CANNOT BE! YOU CAME BACK TO LEARN FROM HIM.

I CAME BACK TO BECOME HIM.

BUT HE'S EVIL! FOUL!

AND DEAD. IT WAS MY LIFE OR HIS.

FISTANDANTILUS HOPED TO RETURN TO THE PRESENT AND PICK UP WHERE THE DARK QUEEN ***LEFT OFF.***

HE PLANNED TO UNITE THE DRAGON HIGHLORDS AND BRING A ***NEW WAR*** TO KRYNN. I STOPPED HIM.

THEN... THEN I HAVE HAD SOME ***INFLUENCE*** OVER YOU. YOU'VE SEEN THE WAYS OF THE ***CHURCH***--

THE CHURCH? FILLED WITH CLERICS WHO SPEND MORE TIME ***SCHEMING*** TO RULE THE WORLD THAN ***TEACHING*** THE WAYS OF THE GODS?

THE TIME OF THE CATACLYSM ***DRAWS NEAR.*** ALREADY THE TRUE CLERICS HAVE BEEN TAKEN FROM KRYNN, ALL SAVE YOU.

THAT'S ***IMPOSSIBLE,*** THE KINGPRIEST IS BLESSED OF THE GODS. HE--

IS HE? ***LOOK*** AT YOUR KINGPRIEST, CRYSANIA.

LOOK PAST THE ***SPELL*** HE WEAVES AROUND HIMSELF, AND TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE.

I SEE... I SEE A ***MAN.***

HE LOOKS ***AFRAID.***

AND IT IS THAT ***FEAR*** THAT WILL PROVE HIS UNDOING, AND BRING DOWN ***DESTRUCTION*** UPON THE WORLD.

It became known in later history as the Night of Doom.

The night the true clerics left Krynn.

Infants sobbed in their cradles.

Animals fled the city.

And the people of Istar dreamt dark, foreboding dreams.

Yet in the shadow of the Kingpriest, these signs went unnoticed...

...until it was too late.

The next day was unseasonably hot and muggy. The sort of weather that made one want to do nothing but **sleep.**

Not that Tasslehoff Burrfoot noticed. He had a **mission.**

Something Raistlin said a few nights ago had struck Tas...

...something about being able to **alter history.** It had given the kender a wonderful idea.

He was going to **stop the Cataclysm.**

He wasn't quite sure **how,** but the kender knew who to ask.

Raistlin.

Tas understood the mage was **evil,** but even Raistlin didn't want everyone in Istar to **die.**

Probably...

IS THIS SOME SORT OF **JOKE?**

NO! I MEAN... I JUST FIGURED STOPPING THE CATACLYSM WOULD BE A GOOD THING.

AND HOW DID YOU PLAN TO DO THAT?

WELL, FIRST I WAS GOING TO DISCUSS IT WITH YOU. AND THEN... IF YOU SAID IT WAS ALRIGHT... I WAS GOING TO JUST GO AND TALK TO THE KINGPRIEST.

I'D TELL HIM HE'S MAKING A BIG MISTAKE... ONE OF THE ALL TIME BIG MISTAKES. I'M SURE HE'D LISTEN.

AND IF HE DIDN'T?

I GUESS I HADN'T CONSIDERED THAT. BUT WE'D PROBABLY JUST GO HOME.

HOME? HOW?

PAR-SALIAN GAVE CARAMON A MAGICAL DEVICE... A JEWELED SCEPTER.

DID HE? INTERESTING...

THERE'S ANOTHER WAY. A ***SURE WAY*** YOU COULD STOP THE CATACLYSM WITHOUT FAIL.

THE MAGICAL DEVICE'S POWERS ARE ***FAR GREATER*** THAN PAR-SALIAN TOLD YOU.

ACTIVATE IT ON THE DAY OF THE CATACLYSM, AND ITS MAGIC WILL DESTROY THE ***FIERY MOUNTAIN*** HIGH ABOVE THE WORLD, SO IT HARMS NO ONE.

REALLY?! THAT'S ***GREAT!***

OH, IT'S JUST... CARAMON NEVER LETS ME ***TOUCH*** THE THING, AND--

BUT THAT'S ***STEALING!***

IF IT'S GONE FOR A SHORT TIME, HE WON'T MISS IT.

BORROWING, AND FOR SUCH A WORTHY CAUSE.

YOU'RE RIGHT! I'LL BE A ***HERO!***

HOW DO I FIND OUT HOW TO WORK IT?

I'LL GIVE YOU ***INSTRUCTIONS.***

AND TAS? ***THANK YOU.***

FOR WHAT?

OH, FOR ***SAVING THE WORLD?*** YOU'RE WELCOME!

That night Crysania came to Raistlin's chambers, drawn to him like a moth to a flame...

I-I DON'T UNDER-STAND.

IT'S SIMPLE, REVERED DAUGHTER. YOU MUST ***COME WITH ME.***

YOU MUST COME WITH ME TO A TIME WHEN WE MAY ENTER THE ***PORTAL*** AND CHALLENGE THE GODS.

YOU KNOW MY PLANS, AND ***MY HEART.*** YOU KNOW WHAT MUST BE DONE.

I CAN'T! YOU MUST WORK YOUR ***EVIL*** WITHOUT ME.

THEN YOU WILL ***DIE,*** BY THE VERY HANDS THAT SENT YOU HERE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

PAR-SALIAN SENT YOU BACK IN TIME WITH MY BROTHER, AND HE GAVE CARAMON AN ITEM THAT WILL RETURN HIM TO OUR TIME.

BUT ***ONLY*** HIM.

YOU'RE ***LYING.***

NO, MY LADY. I HAVE NO REASON TO LIE. THEY, PAR-SALIAN AND ELISTAN, SENT YOU BACK HERE TO ***DIE.***

THIS IS THE ***GOOD*** YOU TELL ME ABOUT? BAH! THEY LIVE IN FEAR AS DOES THE KINGPRIEST!

THEY FEAR ***YOU*** AS THEY FEAR ***ME!*** THE ONLY PATH TO GOOD IS ***MY PATH!***

HELP ME ***DEFEAT*** THE DARK QUEEN, CRYSANIA! I ***NEED YOU!***

He needed her.

The words rang in Crysania's ears and made her heart race.

She and Raistlin were so much alike, like two sides of the same coin.

Would he lie to her? Truly? And if he wasn't lying, what then?

The Cataclysm was coming, if she stayed she'd die.

Had Par-Salian mislead her? Did Elistan know? Was Raistlin's plan really so evil? Crysania had made questions, and few answers.

I-I MUST GO.

I MUST THINK.

MY LADY?

ARE YOU UNWELL?

AS YOU WILL, REVERED DAUGHTER. BUT REMEMBER, TIME IS SHORT.

I KNOW. YOU'LL HAVE MY ANSWER SOON.

Hours passed, but Raistlin couldn't sleep.

Every time he closed his eyes he saw her. Crysania.

His game had always had two parts, undermining her faith in her church...

...and seducing her to his cause. But seduction cut both ways.

Emotions -- feelings he'd thought long buried -- stirred in Raistlin whenever he was near Crysania.

In order to win the cleric's trust, Raistlin had made himself vulnerable to her, and she to him.

Was this love? The mage didn't know, and in the end, he told himself, it didn't matter.

Crysania was a virgin, pure in mind and body. That purity was her strength.

He needed her tarnished, but intact.

Whatever he felt, he wouldn't... he couldn't... allow it to change his plans.

And yet when Raistlin shut his eyes, Crysania was there, waiting for him...

The next morning, the Arena's crowds were **sparse**, with most of regular spectators having chosen to stay home.

Not that Caramon could blame them. After all, the sky was **green**.

DO YOU **OFTEN** SEE SUCH SKIES? IF SO, I KNOW WHY MY PEOPLE CHOOSE TO LIVE BENEATH THE WAVES.

MY FATHER SAILED THE SEAS, AS DID MY **GRANDFATHER**, AS DID I, BEFORE I WAS SENT HERE.

AND I'VE NEVER SEEN NOR HEARD OF A SKY THIS COLOR. IT BODES **ILL**, I'LL WAGER.

NO DOUBT.

The sky **foretold** the Cataclysm, Caramon knew. It meant **the end of the world.**

HAH! SIMPERING **FOOL!**

YOU CAN DO **BETTER** THAN THAT!

GODS, HE'S **TOYING** WITH HIM.

WHO?

THE **RED** MINOTAUR.

YOU AND I, WE FIGHT FOR OUR **FREEDOM**, BUT THE RED MINOTAUR IS FREE.

HE FIGHTS FOR **MONEY**, AND GLORY, AND, MOST OF ALL, **BLOOD**.

AAAH!

HIS TRIDENT HASN'T BEEN **BLUNTED!**

NO. THE BOY IS LORD ONYGION'S, AND RUMOR SAYS THE NOBLEMAN FALLEN OWES THE **WRONG** SORT OF PEOPLE MONEY.

KRAK!

AEEII!

GODS...

JUST ANOTHER OF ARACK'S "ACCIDENTS".

The cyclone struck that evening.

A hellish storm that rocked even the Temple to its foundations...

...and one no sane man would be caught dead in.

But Caramon had a message to deliver, and time was running short.

Tomorrow the Kingpriest would make his final demand of the gods.

And they would answer with the Cataclysm.

Shortly...

I'VE TRIED FOR **WEEKS** TO SEE YOU, REVERED DAUGHTER.

I KNOW, I **APOLOGIZE**, IT'S JUST-- I'VE BEEN BUSY.

LADY CRYSANIA, WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT AN INVITATION TO A YULE PARTY.

TOMORROW THIS CITY WILL **CEASE TO EXIST.**

I KNOW! I KEPT HOPING I COULD STOP IT, BUT THE KINGPRIEST IS **BLIND!** PALANTHAS IS COVERED IN **WHITE FOG**, IN SOLAMNIA NO FLAME WILL BURN, AND ON THE PLAINS OF ABANASINIA HUGE **FIRES** RAGE.

THEY'RE **SIGNS**, AND HE IGNORES THEM!

BUT I... I'M GLAD TO SEE YOUR **HEALTH** HAS IMPROVED.

MY HEALTH... WHAT I **WAS**... DOESN'T MATTER. WE'VE GOT TO **LEAVE**, LADY CRYSANIA!

YES, IT'S JUST-- I'VE **FAILED** AND I CAN'T... I CAN'T LEAVE WITHOUT HIM.

WITHOUT **RAISTLIN.**

BECAUSE YOU *LOVE* HIM.

I'VE BEEN TALKING TO HIM, I THINK HE'S GETTING *BETTER*.

I HOPE.

I LOVE RAIST TOO.

THANK YOU.

MY LADY, IF YOU ARE RIGHT, IF YOUR *GOODNESS* AND YOUR LOVE CAN TURN HIM FROM THOSE DARK PATHS THAT HE WALKS...

...AND LEAD HIM, BY HIS OWN CHOICE, INTO THE *LIGHT*, I WILL DO *ANY-THING* I CAN TO HELP YOU.

I MUST RETURN TO THE ARENA AND GET TAS AND THE DEVICE PAR-SALIAN GAVE ME.

YES, THE *DEVICE*...

I'LL RETURN AS *QUICKLY* AS I CAN.

I UNDERSTAND. MEET ME... MEET ME IN *RAISTLIN'S ROOMS*.

I WILL, MY LADY.

The storm was still raging when Caramon left the Temple...

...and it was nearly dawn by the time he made it back to the Arena.

TAS! I'M BACK, WE HAVE TO--

TAS?

NO!

NO, TAS! YOU COULDN'T! YOU DIDN'T!

But the kender could, and had.

The magical item was gone.

For his part, Tasslehoff Burrfoot had spent the night hidden in the Kingpriest's **audience chamber**...

...trying to remember everything **Raistlin** had told him.

HOW WILL THE MAGICAL DEVICE STOP THE CATACLYSM? WILL I SEE IT SHOOT A ***RAY OF LIGHT?***

WILL IT KNOCK THE KINGPRIEST ***FLAT?***

NO, IT WILL ***NOT*** KNOCK THE KINGPRIEST FLAT, BUT YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THE LIGHT.

I AM? THAT WAS JUST A ***GUESS!*** I MUST BE GETTING ***GOOD*** AT THIS MAGIC STUFF!

YES. ANYWAY, YOU'LL HAVE TO ***"BORROW"*** THE DEVICE FROM CARAMON THE NIGHT BEFORE AND WAIT FOR THE KINGPRIEST TO MAKE HIS ***PLEA.***

THEN I'LL STOP THE CATACLYSM AND BE A ***HERO!***

BUT, WAIT! IF THERE'S ***NO*** CATACLYSM, HOW WILL PEOPLE KNOW I STOPPED IT? HOW--

OH, ***THEY'LL KNOW.***

The Kingpriest's procession began right on time, which Tas appreciated.

He just hoped the cleric didn't ramble on.

PALADINE! YOU SEE THE EVIL THAT SURROUNDS ME!

YOU HAVE BEEN WITNESS TO THE CALAMITIES THAT HAVE BEEN SCOURGING KRYNN THESE PAST DAYS.

YOU KNOW THAT THIS EVIL IS DIRECTED AGAINST ME, PERSONALLY, BECAUSE I AM THE ONLY ONE RIGHTING IT! SURELY YOU MUST SEE NOW THIS DOCTRINE OF BALANCE WILL NOT WORK!

I UNDERSTAND YOU HAD TO PRACTICE THIS DOCTRINE IN THE OLD DAYS, WHEN YOU WERE WEAK.

BUT YOU HAVE ME NOW, YOUR RIGHT ARM, YOUR TRUE REPRESENTATIVE UPON KRYNN. WITH OUR COMBINED MIGHT, I CAN SWEEP EVIL FROM THIS WORLD!

DESTROY THE OGRE RACES! BRING THE WAYWARD HUMANS INTO LINE! FIND NEW HOMELANDS FAR AWAY FOR THE DWARVES AND KENDER AND GNOMES!

AND I WILL RULE IN GLORY, CREATING AN AGE TO RIVAL EVEN THE AGE OF DREAMS!

YOU GAVE THIS AND MORE TO HUMA, PALADINE, WHO WAS NOTHING BUT A RENEGADE KNIGHT OF LOW BIRTH!

I DEMAND YOU GIVE IT TO ME, TOO, THE POWER TO DRIVE AWAY THE SHADOWS OF EVIL THAT DARKEN THIS LAND!

At the same time, across the city...

TAS!

TAS!

WHUD

THERE HE IS, JUST THE MAN WE'VE BEEN *LOOKING FOR.*

YOU'RE *FIGHTING* TODAY.

I CAN'T, ARACK, TAS IS *GONE*, HE--

I DON'T CARE ABOUT SOME *DAMN KENDER.* YOU'RE FIGHTING IN THE *FREEDOM MATCH*, BY SPECIAL REQUEST OF YOUR *OWNER.*

RAIST-- FISTANDANTILUS?!

THE MAGE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT NEEDING TO SEE YOU *BLOODIED.* BRING HIM ALONG, RAAG.

Caramon stepped into the Arena in a daze, questions racing through his mind: How could this be happening? What was Raistlin's plan? And, with the Cataclysm coming, did it matter?

ONCE THEY FOUGHT AS A *TEAM*, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO FREEDOM, THERE CAN BE *NO ALLIES.*

KIIRI THE SIRINE! *PHERAGAS* OF ERGOTH! *CARAMON* THE VICTOR! AND THE *RED MINOTAUR!* ONLY ONE OF THEM WILL LEAVE THIS ARENA *ALIVE!*

KIIRI, PHERAGAS, YOU HAVE TO *RUN*. IT MIGHT ALREADY BE TOO LATE, BUT--

RUN? I WIN THIS BOUT, I GO *FREE*. I WON'T RUN.

YOU *WON'T* WIN.

I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE, VICTOR. OUR WEAPONS ARE *REAL*, YOURS AREN'T.

FINE, KILL EACH OTHER IF YOU *MUST*, BUT I'M FINDING MY FREEDOM *MY OWN* WAY.

LET THE BATTLE BEGIN!

OOF!

PHERAGAS!

YOU'RE NEXT, BASTARD!

WHAM!

KRAK

WHAT'S THE MATTER, "VICTOR"? NO SHRIEKS FOR THE GIRL? NO TEARS?

NO.

SHLUK

As the final words of the Kingpriest's plea faded away, the audience chamber grew silent.

Waiting for the response.

THAT'S MY CUE!

DO IT JUST LIKE RAISTLIN TOLD YOU, TAS...

FIRST, THIS.

ONE OF THESE.

THEN THAT.

AND FINALLY...

DONE!

TIK

PLIK

TINK

W-WHAT!?

OH...

OH, NO!

The gods' answer to the Kingpriest's request began with an earthquake.

THUMMM

GODS! RUN!

Though Caramon barely noticed, too lost in his own thoughts.

This was Raistlin's test for him. He needed to be sure Caramon could fight-- or find someone else to take his place.

And if a few innocents had to die to that end, so be it.

For the first time, Caramon saw the true extent of his brother's ambition, Raistlin's lust for power, and it sickened him.

At last, Caramon quit making excuses for Raistlin.

YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS, MY BROTHER.

Getting out of the Arena was simple after that...

...with the city crumbling around them, no one paid much attention to a lone gladiator.

RAISTLIN!

I SURVIVED YOUR TEST, AS YOU SURVIVED THE TEST IN THE TOWER.

THEY SHATTERED YOUR BODY, AS YOU HAVE SHATTERED MY HEART. IN ITS PLACE IS NOTHING NOW, JUST A COLD EMPTINESS AS BLACK AS YOUR ROBES.

NO MORE WILL DIE FOR YOUR EVIL SCHEMES EXCEPT ONE-- MYSELF.

IT'S FITTING, RAIST. WE CAME INTO THIS WORLD TOGETHER; TOGETHER WE'LL LEAVE IT.

ONE OTHER WILL DIE.

ANOTHER DEATH WILL NOT MATTER MUCH TO EITHER OF US, WILL IT, MY BROTHER?

Caramon's words beat at Crysania's mind like the wings of an evil creature-- yet they held no meaning for her.

All she could see was herself, holding the shining light in her hand, leading the people.

The Key... the Portal... it was all so clear.

PALADINE WILL ACCEPT YOU TO HIS BOSOM, REVERED DAUGHTER.

DO NOT BE AFRAID.

DIE!

NO!

YOU CHOSE WELL.

MY LOVE.

KKKOOM!

Tas raced frantically down the hall. He'd done everything Raistlin said, but something had gone wrong.

The mage would tell him what to do, Raistlin...

...was gone.

Tas was all alone.

And the sky had begun to rain fire.

الإهداء

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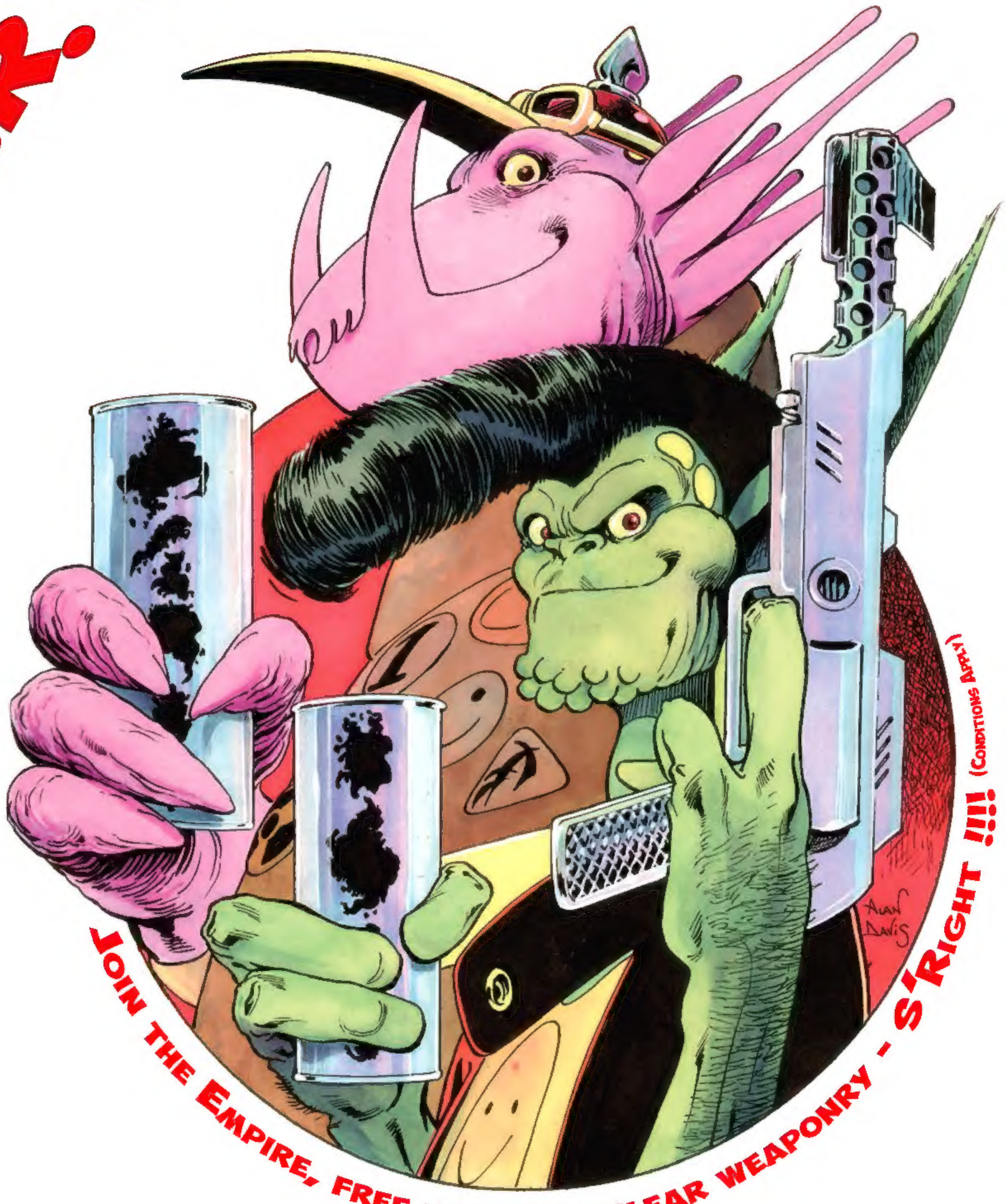

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